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The Experts' Top Tips For Home Entertainment

Q



Oasis 25th Anniversary Spectacular
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THE INSIDE STORY
Lost Photos
Revelatory Secrets
The Tale Behind Each Song
...and every B-side, too!



Plus!

Ed O'Brien

The rogue
Radiohead
steps out

**Jarvis
Cocker**

Delivers his
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+ Flohio Jason Isbell Ghostpoet Kooks Avalanches Mark Lanegan Princess Nokia



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June 2020

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Backstage...



Q editor Ted Kessler:
"If you can, please
buy some music."

I hope very much that you are healthy, but if you are not, that you soon will be. At the time of writing, we are all doing fine at Q.

Music can seem trivial in these moments of unusual international anxiety. Immediately after September 11, 2001, the music stopped. For a period, newspaper columnists agonised about how entertainment culture would ever recover. Then, slowly, as we all rediscovered how melody provides

strength and succour and inspiration in times of extreme stress, the music returned. By that Christmas, we were raving again with extra relish. The record shows, too, that 2002 was a vintage year. Life may not return as quickly this time, but it will.

So, now, if you can, buy some music please. Help those musicians, and labels, and record stores whose lives are being indirectly but seriously impacted by Covid-19. We'll need them when the dust settles more than ever.

For our part, we started this issue in an office and then spent the final fortnight in our homes making the magazine remotely. Technology, in the words of Paul Weller, is a must. Sometimes, imposed limits can stimulate and inspire, and we've found that to be the case, not just in plotting some elements of this issue but also in the imagining of future issues which, in all probability, will also be made under the current lockdown. We've exciting plans up our sleeves.

To that end, I assure you that you'll still be able to receive or buy new issues of Q whatever the circumstances. Elsewhere in this issue are details of how you can subscribe and have Q delivered to your home for free, or how you can subscribe digitally, too, or even buy single issues online or digitally. We are also stocked by Apple News+ if you decide to subscribe to that service (mention us if you do, please).

In short, we are doing everything possible to deliver you the best, maybe only, contemporary music magazine every month no matter what. I hope you enjoy it.

This is a cracker, I feel.

Take care.

Ted Kessler, Editor, Q Magazine.



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[...And the music that got them through Q's first WFH print week...]

EDITORIAL

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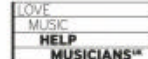
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Sorry 925



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Splendid

In emergency, break glass. We asked Q's writers and some of our musician friends to suggest ways to make the most of your time on Covid-19 lockdown for a **Choice Cuts Isolation Special. Dig in! If we're still housebound next month, we'll deliver part two...**



Victoria Segal Q Writer

Music: For dark times not done darkly, there's Cornershop's excellent latest

album, *England Is A Garden*. Similarly, Bonnie "Prince" Billy's intimate *I Made A Place* manages to keep the apocalypse on a very human scale.

Screen: *Trigonometry* (BBC2)/*Feel Good* (C4) – two gently idealised shows about modern romance that makes audiences fall as hard in love with the characters as the characters do with each other.

Books: *We Have Always Lived In The Castle*, Shirley Jackson's icy American gothic, is all about people who don't like to go out much. West by Carys Davies is a tiny novel about isolation and wildness: read it in a day and feel a sense of achievement. For pure

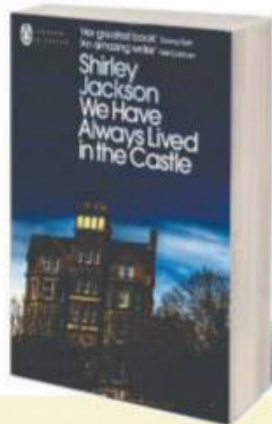
escapist joy, there's always Elton John's outrageous autobiography, *Me*.

Podcast: *The Last Bohemians* – vivid interviews with women who have escaped the constraints of conventional society, from Molly Parkin and Cosey Fanni Tutti to Pauline Black and LSD advocate and aristocrat Amanda Feilding. Free your mind, at least.

Online resource/article: @theurbanbirder and The Self-Isolating Bird Club (@SIbirdClub) offer hints on birdwatching from indoors. Pretend you are James Stewart in *Rear Window*, only with sparrows.

Recipe: Something experimental with chickpea flour as there was no plain flour in the corner shop. *Gatte Ki Sabzi* (vegetable curry with dumplings) looks promising. If there are vegetables.

Isolation top tip: Be very careful around daytime TV, it can be ruinous if you fall into its grip. *Dom Does America* is almost performance art.



Juliette Jackson Singer, *The Big Moon*



Music: Something I have found really fun is setting up a collaborative isolation playlist on Spotify with a few friends. Nice way to keep in touch. **See also:** the new *Porridge* Radio album. It's fabulous.

Screen: I have been chewing my mates' ears off about *Succession* for the last six months. It's sooooo good. Will have you constantly doing the laughing/crying confusing-melange-of-feelings thing. I also love a good black and white weepy. Anything by German director Douglas Sirk.

Books: I have just started *Trick Mirror* by Jia Tolentino which was given to me by Celia [*Archer, bandmate*]. It's like reading

everything you already thought but couldn't articulate so perfectly and humorously. I also dug out some poetry by Patrick Kavanagh for a depressing solo St Patrick's Day. Somehow it hasn't aged.

Podcast: The Blindboy podcast. He's a brilliant storyteller and social commentator, with interesting opinions on anything from the Casio keyboard to global warming. He wears a plastic bag on his head to stay anonymous but don't let that put you off. He's an expert raconteur. And on top of it all he has this majestic Irish accent and soft voice which makes me feel safe and lovely.

Online resource/article: Excellent-quarantine-ideas.com created by @Rifke.world is a gorgeous slice of human ingenuity. You can get ideas about things to do and also contribute your own.

Recipe: Something the supermarkets are definitely not running low on: jackfruit. They had a whole pyramid of it in Sainsbury's this morning. I'm going to cook it up with spices and turn it into fake pulled pork and eat it in wraps.

Isolation top tip: I just bought a Nintendo Wii. It's the cheapest second-hand console around at the moment and we're all about to be very broke so... quids in.



Dorian Lynskey Q Writer

Music: With its abundant grace and warmth, Caribou's *Suddenly* is

an album that makes you feel like you're being well looked after. The song *Home* feels especially apt right now.

Screen: The movie version of Emma Jane Unsworth's novel *Animals* seems lightweight at first but deepens into a vivid study of youthful hedonism pushed well past its sell-by date. Savour the vicarious thrill of watching Holliday Grainger and Alia Shawkat careening from club to pub to party. Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon's rigorous schedule of fine dining, bickering and impersonations is always enviable but their picturesque mid-life odyssey in *The Trip To Greece* makes for particularly delicious escapism.

Book: Christopher Hitchens was a tirelessly smart and exacting essayist and any of his anthologies are well worth dipping into for a potent hit of his war against bullshit. Except the one about why women aren't funny. That's bad.

Podcast: If you're rewatching classic movies, do it in the company of Ringer's *The Rewatchables*. Special guest Quentin Tarantino's joyful *Dunkirk* fandom is the place to start.

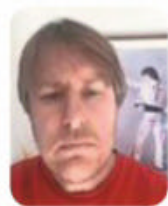
Online resource/article: New Yorker

Isolation!

profile writers have the unique privilege of practically cohabiting with their subjects so that they can tell you more than you ever realised you wanted to know. Ian Parker on Yuval Noah Harari and Emily Nussbaum on Fiona Apple are two recent masterclasses.

Recipe: If you arm yourself with the right spices, Indian food is the most satisfying restaurant experience to recreate at home and it takes a therapeutically long time to prepare. BBC Good Food has an arsenal of easy recipes.

Isolation top tip: That time-consuming but not unpleasant job you were always too busy to get around to? Do it now. I'm painstakingly listing records on Discogs to prepare for my new career as a second-hand vinyl mogul.



John Harris Q Writer

Music: Since Christmas, I've been immersed in as much music as possible by **The**

Comet Is Coming, the London jazz/electronica/whatever trio that includes the sax player Shabaka Hutchings. Start with last year's cosmic *Trust In The Life Force Of The Deep Mystery*, then explore from there.

Screen: A long, long time ago, Channel 4 screened *A Grin Without A Cat*, the late French director Chris Marker's epic two-part documentary about 1968, the rise and fall of a new kind of political left, and lots more. You can get it on DVD – if you're at all interested in post-war history, it may change you for ever. It did me.

Book: *Americana* is superb graphic novel by Irish writer/artist Luke Healy, about walking the 2600 mile Pacific Crest Trail – life-affirming, funny, sad, and brimming with the joy of friendship, which all means a lot right now.

Podcast: A friend tipped me off about George The Poet's *Have You Heard George's Podcast?* It's a model for how to do it: freewheeling, intimate, with words so good they almost sound like music.

Online resource/article: I like TechCrunch,



Yannis Philippakis Singer, Foals

Music: I'm really enjoying the new Four Tet album, *Sixteen Oceans*. Also, Jack [Bevan, Foals drummer] made a really good quarantine playlist called *On My Own* on Spotify. It's quite arty.

Screen: *Tiger King* on Netflix, which is about big cat owners in America who get embroiled in attempted murder. It's pretty rad.

Book: I'm reading a book called *The Hidden Pleasures Of Life* by Theodore Zeldin. I feel like one positive from this period will be that we get to reflect on the way that we

which is a news and comment outlet about Big Tech and startups, but also great on the small 'p' politics of the platforms, apps and what have you that basically define how we live now.

Recipe: Sprouts, halloumi and harissa (if you can find any), from a book called *The Green Roasting Tin* by Rukmini Iyer. So easy!

Isolation top tip: Learn an instrument. The world needs more bassists, I reckon.



live our lives both as individuals and as a collective and this book is quite thought-provoking so I thought it'd be a good time to read it and think a bit more deeply about what the future is going to hold once lockdown is over.

Podcast: The Jessie Ware podcast with her mum, *Table Manners*, is always good for a laugh. I feel like people are getting into cooking so that's a good one to encourage people to cook.

Recipe: Banana bread. I made some and it was pretty damn fine. If you put walnuts in, it really goes next level. If you've got bananas that are going a bit brown, put them in the freezer and you can use those for banana bread later. The flavour is more intense than an under-ripe banana.

Isolation top tip: A nightly cocktail with mates via some type of app can keep the haunting at bay. Also, set a goal for the week. Mine this week is to wash down all my plants and get dust off the leaves. That's my week.



Rebecca Nicholson Q Writer

Music: You might as well plump for someone with a massive back catalogue. I've always filed Joni Mitchell under "music you have to concentrate on", and what better time to concentrate on 19 albums' worth of stuff?

Screen: *The Good Wife* is proper TV, 22-23 episodes per season, seven seasons, and none of your eight-episode prestige nonsense. It's a gripping legal drama that morphs into a political masterpiece and

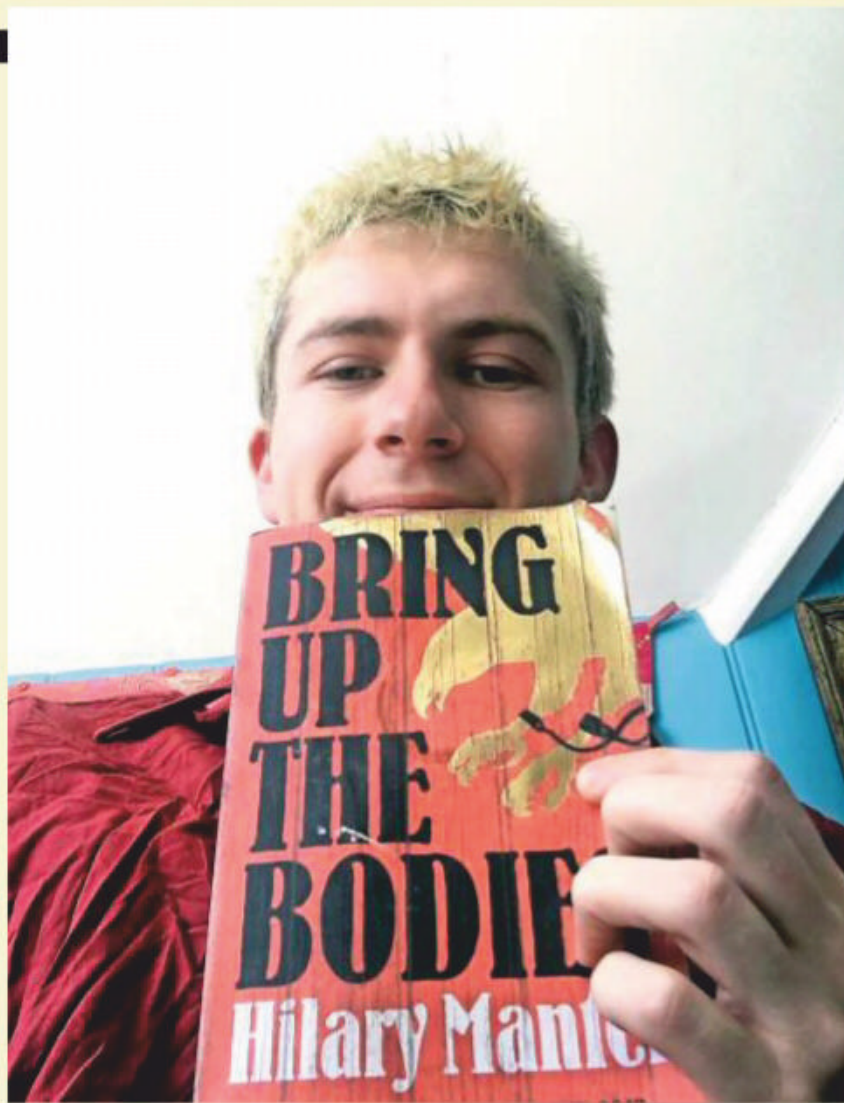
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Charlie Steen

Singer, Shame

Music: I'm usually pretty late to the party when it comes to the features of technology that are already well ingrained around the world – my newest discovery being Spotify Radio. It's been the deus ex machina that prevents me having to make my own decisions. In the past few days the algorithm trail usually starts to pave off into its own direction after I've finished *Muso Ko* by Habib Koité or *The Legendary George Formby* – some truly fascinating caves of music have been explored through these two catalysts.

Screen: The screen is something I spend a lot of time in front of. In times of turmoil, it's a ritual of mine to plug myself into a screen and avoid human interaction. *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly* and *Once Upon A Time In The West* recently made me understand the roots of cinematic genius. *Narcos*: Mexico took me through these last weeks with Hispanic power and cheap Spanish lessons; plus I've gone back to the beginning of *Ozark*, a criminally underrated Netflix original.



Book: I'm halfway through *Bring Up The Bodies* by Hilary Mantel, the sequel to the incredible *Wolf Hall*. Honestly, I can't recommend these books enough: the writing is poetic, cutting and contains all the dark humour England in the 16th-Century deserves. I find myself only slowing down when wanting to savour the moment.

Podcast: *Desert Island Discs* is everything I could want and more from an interview. The hosts are always so engaged and allow each guest to really let go of themselves and delve into the memories that link to the music they have selected. Would recommend starting with either John Cooper Clarke, Stephen Fry, Levi Roots or Judi Dench.

Online resource/article:

It has been incredible to see how much information and help the Facebook groups Covid-19 (enter your area) have been able to provide for the communities. People are able to offer advice on exercise routines to do at home, what shops still have a decent supply of loo roll (stop fucking bulk-buying it!) and offer advice on what we can all be doing to help those around us who are suffering. Would really recommend joining.

Recipe: Yesterday, I pulled out my scales, rolled up my sleeves and crafted a chocolate-chip banana bread loaf. It's quick, easy, and, if you've got some mouldy bananas lying around, is the perfect way not to waste them.

Isolation top tip: Don't set yourself unrealistic goals to do in this period. If you're not about to finish *Ulysses*, or haven't mastered a new language yet, there's no cause to flay yourself. There's a lot of other things minds are focused on at the moment which are equally as important. Helping those who need it, as always, is what we should strive for.

incorporates real-world news, and you can only wish it had stuck around for its Covid-19 season.

Book: Namwali Serpell's *The Old Drift* is a brilliant debut novel that tells a modern history of Zambia, sort of, incorporating a wide range of genres, including science fiction. It is unlike anything I've ever read, and will have you hooked from page one.

Podcast: Esther Perel's *Where Should We Begin?* allows us to eavesdrop on couples' therapy, which may become a very useful resource, should social isolation stretch on.

Online resource/article: Audible. I'm a new convert to audiobooks, which require a different level of concentration to even podcasts, and there's something very soothing about being so immersed in a story.

Recipe: Try fermentation. It's an edible science project for your kitchen, which you have to tend to daily, and you might get a decent loaf out of a sourdough starter, say. Top tip: kimchi really hums, so don't try that in confined quarters.

Isolation top tip: Educate yourself. FutureLearn has loads of free online courses teaching everything you never knew you needed. I've just signed up to learn Irish Gaelic.



Rupert Howe

Q Writer

Music: If cloistered family life permits, now might be the ideal time to tackle some major "durational" works by, say, La Monte Young, whose *The Well-Tuned Piano* runs to six meditative hours. Or plunge into the 900-hour online Andrew Weatherall archive dubbed the "Weatherdrive".

Screen: The new series of *Kingdom*, Netflix's



gripping zombie thriller set in medieval Korea, suddenly seems all-too relevant.

Books: I'd like to tackle one of the unread doorstops I already own. *JR* by William Gaddis, perhaps. Alternatively our neighbour has offered a loan of Richard Powers's recent tree-themed epic *The Overstory*.

Podcast: A new Jordan Peele series for Spotify has been promised. Though I'll also be checking Bob Mortimer's Twitter feed for more "Hilario" Train Guy updates.

Online resource/article: Large galleries are moving exhibits online, though many visual artists are already producing intriguing works in the digital realm: Jakob Kudsk Steensen's immersive landscapes, Jonas Lund's quirky interventions or Eileen Simpson and Ben White's inspiring Open Music Archive. Meanwhile, I'll be twitchily checking *The Intercept* and *Novara Media* for the viral stories behind the headlines.

Recipe: Dan Lepard's sourdough "mill" loaf from his book *The Handmade Loaf*. A nutritious, mixed-grain staple perfect for toast and sturdy sandwiches.

Isolation top tip: An escape route. My trusty Kona Jake The Snake cyclocross bike is always propped up in the hall ready to explore our local holloways.



Leonie Cooper

Q Writer

Music: There are currently nine Brown Acid compilations, Riding Easy Records' heavy, heady crate-digging delights of rare proto-metal and psych sounds from the 1960s. Now you have the time to listen to them all. The 10th in the series is set for release on 20 April, so if you get addicted, a fresh helping isn't too far off.

Screen: Arena's icon-packed 1981 doc about the world's most decadent dive, the Chelsea Hotel, is on iPlayer. Worth it just for the scene in which Andy Warhol and William Burroughs discuss chicken fried steak.

Books: I'm rereading Eve's Hollywood by queen of LA Eve Babitz, mainly because I'd quite like to be drinking margaritas in the Chateau Marmont with 1970s Harrison Ford at the moment rather than being trapped in my kitchen in Tottenham.

Podcast: Excellent person and fellow Q writer Kate Hutchinson's The Last Bohemians is a joy, especially the Gee Vaucher and Pamela Des Barres episodes.

Recipe: Fry up some sliced new potatoes, add a tin of sardines, some chopped parsley, spring onions and some bashed up pine nuts. Compliments to Nigel Slater.

Isolation top tip: Get into Yoga With Adriene on YouTube; as recommended by synth-pop divas MUNA.



Chris Catchpole

Assistant Editor

Music: Out now, London duo Sorry's excellent debut album, 925, has been on repeat in my flat for the past week. Also Dust On The Nettles: A Journey Through The British Underground Folk Scene 1967-72.

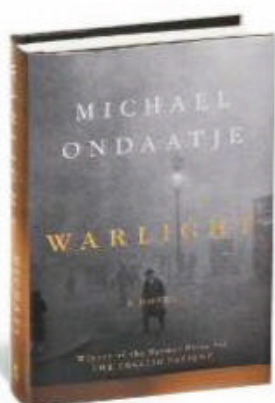
Screen: In lieu of being able to venture around the capital, James Mason's 1967 documentary The London Nobody Knows remains fascinating and surprisingly unsentimental viewing (available in full on Dailymotion).

Book: Michael Ondaatje's *Warlight* is one of the best books I've read in years. I'd pick it up again in a heartbeat.

Podcast: Comedian Brett Goldstein's Films To Be Buried With is always entertaining and now doubles up as useful guide on how to spend your evenings for the foreseeable future.

Online resource/article: Forget about seeing the latest blockbusters, simply watch Half In The Bag's exasperated takedowns of them on YouTube.

Recipe: Slow-cooked



Tjinder Singh

Cornershop



Music: I'd always dismissed a group called Led Zeppelin because I've considered their followers to be the sort of people who piss in their pints and chuck it at the stage. I was ill 10 years ago and then I suddenly got into them. They've got a lot of imagination in the lyrics and a great catalogue of albums to get your teeth into. It's a good couple of months' worth of music to listen to.

Screen: My wife is from Vosges in France and there was a murder near her home in the '80s. It consumed the area, the rest of France and the media. It got made into a Netflix documentary in a series called Who Killed Little Gregory?. It's got a lot of depth and a lot of disbelief. It's a very sad story.

Books: I revisited 1984 and I've just started Animal Farm again too. Next, I'd like to read an early-'90s Soviet novel called We by Yevgeny Zamyatin. It's about dystopia and was a big influence on Orwell.

Podcast: There's only one, Remainiacs. In a time of crisis that was the run-up to Brexit, it was the only decent commentary about it. Remainiacs found the perfect balance between the seriousness of what was going on, in-depth knowledge and a light-hearted approach.

Online resource/article: In the Windrush report [by the Home Affairs Select Committee] they talk about institutional ignorance and thoughtlessness towards issues of race and I think it'll make for great reading.

Recipe: A very simple one: an onion tart. Spanish onions, two eggs, milk. Caramelize the onions in a frying pan, mix with the egg and milk, add pepper and nutmeg on top, then put into a pastry tart. Place in the oven for 30-40 minutes at medium heat.

Isolation top tip: Whether there's isolation or not, don't ever listen to the UK government.

lentil and mushroom bolognese. You don't have to be vegan to appreciate this one and if my local corner shop is anything to go by, lentils remain plentiful.

Isolation top tip: Get some cans and salted snacks in and arrange a session at your preferred video conference call platform for a virtual knees-up.



Rachel Aroesti

Q Writer

Music: It may be a righteously scathing critique of idiotic young men on the lash, but

Happy Hour by The Housemartins is also a jolt of pure joy, its cantering drums and lilting melody guaranteed to mentally transport you somewhere cheerier. Possibly the pub.

Screen: First shown in 2009 and then promptly forgotten, *Cowards* is a lost sketch-show classic.

Starring Tim Key, Tom Basden, Lloyd Woolf and Stefan Golaszewski – who between them have since written a host of great British sitcoms – its three episodes are both deeply odd and roaringly funny.

Book: Tina Fey's autobiography *Bossypants* isn't just absolutely hysterical, it's also wise and insightful about the logic of anxiety and our attempts to control a senseless universe.

Podcast: Elis James and John Robins's charmingly unpolished and in-joke-riddled BBC Radio 5 Live podcast is warm, funny and ridiculously comforting. I want to listen to this rubbish!

Online resource/article: Alistair Green's Twitter feed is a showcase for his short-form, minimalist and impeccably brilliant character comedy. Currently the happiest place on the internet.

Isolation top tip: Block any addictive or anxiety-inducing websites on your phone: it stops the kind of terrifying unconscious scrolling that leaves you feeling like your thumb has a mind of its own.



Eve Barlow

Q Writer

Music: Put some house music on. Nobody needs The Smiths right now. Singer-songwriters

will only make you cry. Fire up your streaming service, make a playlist of classic '80s Chicago house, Detroit techno and UK rave anthems. Put your trainers on, turn the oven up, close your eyes and have it large.

Screen: When Buffy Summers delivered the infamous line, "if the apocalypse comes, beep me", Covid-19 was the stuff of our worst >>

Gaz Coombes

Singer, Supergrass

Music: I've been listening to a lot of Creedence Clearwater Revival. The 1970 album *Cosmo's Factory* is a bit of an energy boost in the morning. It helps to put one in a slightly more energetic frame of mind.

Screen: I watched *Escape From Pretoria* the other day, with Daniel Radcliffe. Me and Jools [Gaz's wife] have got a bit of a thing about prison escape films. It's right up our street.

Books: My daughter bought me *Strange Stars* by Jason Heller, a cool pick-up-when-ever-you-fancy book. It's about sci-fi's influence on music and popular culture and the impact the visual

side of science fiction had.

Podcast: I always love listening to WTF With Marc Maron. He talks so much sense and has insightful guests. There was a great one



the other day with Dan Aykroyd, and another with Neil Young from a couple of years ago. It's definitely worth rooting out.

Online resource/article: BBC Sport is still a gentle way to start the day without diving straight

into the news, and The New Yorker always has great articles.

Recipe: I do a good ramen, with a bit of stock, chuck some veggies in, chicken and noodles and loads of ginger. It's good to pump that ginger into the body.

Isolation top tip: Do what you can do in the moment you can do it. Don't get sucked in and go down the rabbit hole of conjecture on social media too much. Make sure you take a break from the news.



imaginations. Yet what better way to while away the hours pondering the end of the world than reliving a seven-series whipsmart fantasy drama in which the protagonist refuses to let nightmares ruin our reality. A pandemic looks cosy next to some of the ghouls here, plus the soundtrack rocks.

Book: The Rihanna book is a sturdy investment and might sit on your coffee table without anyone to admire it for months. But Rihanna is the most exquisite pop star we have, and every single page of this eye-watering collection of photographs across her entire career will make you gasp.

Podcast: On Being is a podcast about the deeper questions of humanity, politics, art and philosophy. It's hosted by US journalist and author Krista Tippett, the episodes are almost an hour in length and always feature a guest specialist. Guaranteed to start conversations, offer perspective, and give you inspiration in a time where we seek answers to the big questions.

Recipe: Soups are the best way to make cheap perishables go further for longer. There are countless recipes online. Add potatoes to make them more filling. Freeze them so you can choose from a variety.

Isolation top tip: Set up a home

gym area and check out the fitness studios making YouTube pages and Instagram classes. Keeping your body moving is good for the mind more than anything else. If you don't have weights at home, you can use heavy books, or washing powder bottles. Get creative.



Sylvia Patterson

Q Writer

Music: Strife, loneliness, poverty, horror, heartbreak... we humans have been here before. The country and western classics know the score: stream *Patsy Cline*, Johnny Cash, all of them, for solace, solidarity and survival through the knell of gallows humour.

Screen: The Godfather Trilogy DVD.

Over nine hours of loyalty-testing, back-stabbing, vengeance-settling Mafioso intensity. Currently confined family life is, by comparison, a doddle.

Book: The Complete Unreliable Memoirs: Clive James. Jokes! We can't live without jokes, especially now. All five autobiography volumes in-one from the quipsome master of comic exaggeration (currently £12.99 on Kindle, a snip!)



Podcast: Ways To Change The World: Krishnan Guru-Murthy. The Channel 4 inquisitor invites "extraordinary people" (professors, politicians, authors, comedians) to ponder The Revolution – and how we can all save ourselves from ourselves.

Online resource/article: Move off the couch, regularly, otherwise we'll all be dead anyway from diabetes/thrombosis/obesity. Yoga With Adrienne on YouTube will have your legs in the air like you just don't care.

Recipe: Toast'n'proper butter. Sometimes it's all you need.

Isolation top tip: In nature-restricted times, grow your own indoor plants. Only living like leaf-fondling, altruistic hippies will save us now. Won't it?



Tom Doyle

Q Writer

Music: No song lyric is more pertinent at the moment than the line, "This is one nation under a roof" from JARVIS... 's House Music All Night Long, a track exploring the joys of raving in isolation. The forthcoming album, *Beyond The Pale*, is equally ace.

Screen: The latest season of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* isn't all great – see the

toe-curling Benny Hill moments where Larry David attempts some lumpy #MeToo jokes. Most of it is brilliant though, especially the thread where he gets pissed off with his local coffee shop, Mocha Joe's, and starts up a rival café – Latte Larry's – next door.

Book: Scottish author Graeme Armstrong's *The Young Team* has become a massive word-of-mouth hit, and rightly so, fictionalising his experiences as a noughties gang member in Lanarkshire.

Podcast: Not a podcast, but record producer John Leckie's *The Electric Blues Radio Show* on Mixcloud is a reminder of the raw, punky roots of the genre.

Online resource/article: Limiting exposure to the news is probably a good idea. Which makes spoof site *The Daily Mash* all the more useful. Recent headlines: "Your Guide To This Week's Looting"; "I Am The Bog Roll King".

Recipe: Stovies. Thinly slice and fry onions and spuds, add veg or beef stock, simmer and mush, stir in corned beef or frozen chopped spinach. Serve with oatcakes. The ultimate comfort food.

Isolation top tip: ITV4. *Minder!* *The Sweeney!* *Kojak!* *Columbo!* You know it makes sense.



boss won't notice you'd slipped away.

Isolation top tip:

Unburden yourself! No need to write *King Lear* – we're anxious enough without arbitrary trials of self-worth. De-stress, imbibe comfort culture and stare out of the window with a cup of tea, if that's your lot.



George Garner Q Writer

Music: Jay Electronica – *A Written Testimony*. Almost as if Jay Electronica delivering his

long-awaited full-length outing wasn't enough, most of these tracks feature Jay-Z on downright imperious form. Guaranteed to rank among 2020's finest hip-hop albums.

Screen: *Hip-Hop Evolution*. The great strength of this Netflix series' run through hip-hop's grand narrative arc is its

willingness to shine a light on regional scenes. Beyond familiar explorations of gangsta rap et al come in-depth looks at New Orleans bounce music, Bay Area rap and much more.

Book: Robert Kolker's *Lost Girls*, his riveting 2013 investigation into the unsolved Long Island serial killer case, recently spawned a Netflix original film. Focusing as much on the victims' lives as their tragic fates, this is true crime that prioritises compassion over grisly spectacle.

Podcast: On each episode of *Drink Champs*, rapper N.O.R.E. sits down with a different hip-hop legend – including Nas and Snoop Dogg – to discuss their lives in music.

All while getting shitfaced together.

Online resource/article: *Gremmie.net*. For anyone falling in love with Pearl Jam's new album *Gigaton*, this fan-site collates a jaw-dropping array of rarities, including unreleased demos.

Recipe: Hummus can – and will – go with anything.

Isolation top tip: If you can't resist snacks, don't buy them.



Jazz Monroe Q Writer

Music: Lorenzo Senni's *Scacco Matto* – the Italian maestro's third album in

a decade is, per his trademark, a burst of dropless, plateau-techno. Hit repeat and let its melodic perfectionism emerge.

Screen: For exquisitely soundtracked escapism, bow down to Studio Ghibli's *My Neighbor Totoro*. Netflix's acquisition of the animated classic is perfectly timed: airy enchantment beamed into our dingy bunkers.

Book: *Lanny* by Max Porter. By turns folksy and beguilingly avant-garde, this modern British masterpiece conjures a village's disintegration into tabloid-fuelled hysteria when a boy disappears.

Online resource/article: Citizen Insane's Radiohead press archive. Start with the late David Cavanagh's Kid A-era Q profile, then work outwards through an invaluable time capsule.

Recipe: Pea shoot stir fry is so hands-off it's barely a recipe. Roughly chop two garlic cloves and a chilli. Fry in murderously hot sesame oil for 15 seconds. Add 150g of pea shoots, sprinkle salt and toss for one minute. Voila! Fresh, earthy deliciousness – and your



Banks Singer

Music: I've been trying to listen to some upbeat stuff, like Chaka Khan. I've also been trying to sit down at my piano every day for at least an hour too, even if I'm not feeling particularly inspired, just as an exercise to see what comes out. It's been surprising, almost every day I've come up with an idea.

Screen: I've been watching

On My Block on Netflix.

It's a TV series about a group of friends in high school involved in Hispanic gang life but it's also really funny. It's about friendship and love and being young in the Los Angeles gang scene.

Book: I recently read *Reincarnation Blues* by Michael Poore. It's amazing. It's set in this world where you get 10,000 chances in life to reach perfection.

It's a really good book.

Online resource/article:

Honestly, I've really been trying to stay offline lately. It's so easy to hole up on the internet and be online all the time. So it's been really nice for me – I've been drawing a lot and trying to cook. There's a little private hike behind my house, so I've been doing that too.

Recipe: I'm a terrible chef. I've been doing FaceTime with my cousin Emma, who's an amazing cook, and she's been trying to help me learn how to do the most simple things. It's not been going amazingly so far. I don't even want to give you any advice about cooking, just know I'm in the beginning phases.

My family has a group text where everyone has been sending their meals, and they always laugh at mine!

Isolation top tip: The days that I've felt the best, I've made an itinerary for myself in the morning and listed things like, "for an hour, do this". There's been times when I didn't want to follow it, but when I did I've felt more normal as I've had things to do. >>



Dave Everley

Q Writer

Music: Goth never dies, it just lurks in the shadows. Something is stirring once

again – LA's The Wraith, the UK's Naut and a wavelet of other bands are partying like it's 1985. If we're going down, we may as well go down pickled in snakebite and black.

Screen: Now Bong Joon-ho is the director of the moment, it's a good time to give some love to his overlooked pre-Parasite sci-fi masterpiece Snowpiercer – a fever-dream comedy set on a train forever circling a ruined world.

Book: Boris Akunin's Fandorin series is sly political commentary and stylistic shapeshifting masquerading as lavish, turn-of-the-century Russian detective novels.

Podcasts: The BBC is on a roll with podcasts. Peter Crouch's warm and hilarious Crouchcast is the gift that keeps on giving, and historical/comedy mash-up You're Dead To Me is a history lesson for people who don't give a shit about history – the Josephine Baker episode is tremendous.

Online resource/article: Dangerous Minds is a trove of art, music and pop-culture weirdness. Looking for footage of The Damned jamming with The Clash or the story of mysterious Beatles-alikes Klaatu? They've got you covered.

Recipe: Miles Davis's legendary recipe for beef chilli, also known as "South Side Chicago Chili Mack". Haven't tried it, but now is as good a time as any, even if the exact measures involved are a little bit freeform.

Isolation top tip: Don't spend more time than you need to on the homepages of newspaper websites. It'll only depress you.



Andrew Perry

Q Writer

Music: At 8pm every

night after the kids' bedtime, I'm playing one disc from Bob Dylan's The Complete Album Collection Vol. One – the complete Zimm', in date order, in 43 days. Will 1985's Empire Burlesque album test my resolve? Hell no, I won't want lockdown to end, but if I do, I'll revert to Rose City Band's forthcoming Summerlong LP, with its exquisite, upful sonics, and apposite yearning for warmth and freedom.

Screen: I've started on Akira Kurosawa's Samurai Collection because, spared the usual daily grind, I can actually go the full subtitled distance of the genius Japanese auteur's



Rebecca Lucy Taylor

Self Esteem

Music: Self Esteem, Compliments Please.

I listened to it recently having not done for ages because I've written the next one and I keep thinking, "God, it's not as good as the first one" and panicking. But it still totally bangs, though my next one is even better. In my opinion.

Screen: This TV show called The End. It's on Sky Atlantic and it's really well-written. It's about women and ageing.

Books: I recently read Marina Abramovic's autobiography, Walk Through Walls. At the moment I'm reading A Song For You: My Life With Whitney Houston by Robyn Crawford, who was Whitney's secret girlfriend. It's about her life with Whitney, where she basically confirms that they were together.

epic-length meditations on honour and swordsmanship without conking out – a silver lining to the sudden loss of income!

Book: I'm halfway through Paul Gorman's The Life & Times Of Malcolm McLaren, an inspirationally detailed new biography of the late Sex Pistols manager.

It's 840 pages long, so I won't be done any time soon.

Online resource/article: I've been dipping into NTS Radio's archive of Andrew Weatherall's two-hour Music's Not For Everyone shows which, dating back to July 2014, offers not only an opportunity to muse on the

'Guv'nor's passing, but also a regular portal through which to flee to a better kosmische dimension.

Recipe: As we speak, the sun's out, so later I'll do "reggae fish" on the BBQ, modified from Grill It With Levi Roots – basically, cod with oil, pepper, sugar and chilli, boiled over charcoal in foil bags. Irie feelin's!

Isolation top tip: Play more reggae: on a mental health tip, it's incontrovertibly beneficial.



Podcast: I listen to a podcast called Race Chaser, which is two drag queens discussing RuPaul's Drag Race. I only seem to be able to listen and watch things to do with drag queens because I can't compete in it.

Online resource/article: I'm getting soothed by those 'before' and 'after' pollution maps. I love that. If people weren't dying in their thousands, I'd be into the idea of a mass stay-in to

reset the world. But it's a shame people are dying.

Recipe: I don't really have a recipe, but because I'm at my mum and dad's, they've got loads of stuff that I don't buy so I've just been on a Ready Steady Cook vibe, making new things up as I go along with what they've got.

Isolation top tip: Don't get in touch with your exes, but do start a wildly misjudged red flag-ridden online relationship.



Paul Stokes

Q Writer

Music: Beirut's 2019 album Gallipoli fills you with the same wanderlust one gets

peering out the window on the first morning of a holiday, so goes some way to compensate for the cancelled flight blues.

Screen: I've seen all of Morse and Bergerac, so it's a relief Sicilian series Inspector Montalbano is streaming all year for free on BBC iPlayer. Clever crime, on an island!

Book: At a hefty 800-plus pages, The Mirror & The Light, the final part of Hilary Mantel's Tudor trilogy, has arrived just in time for isolation.

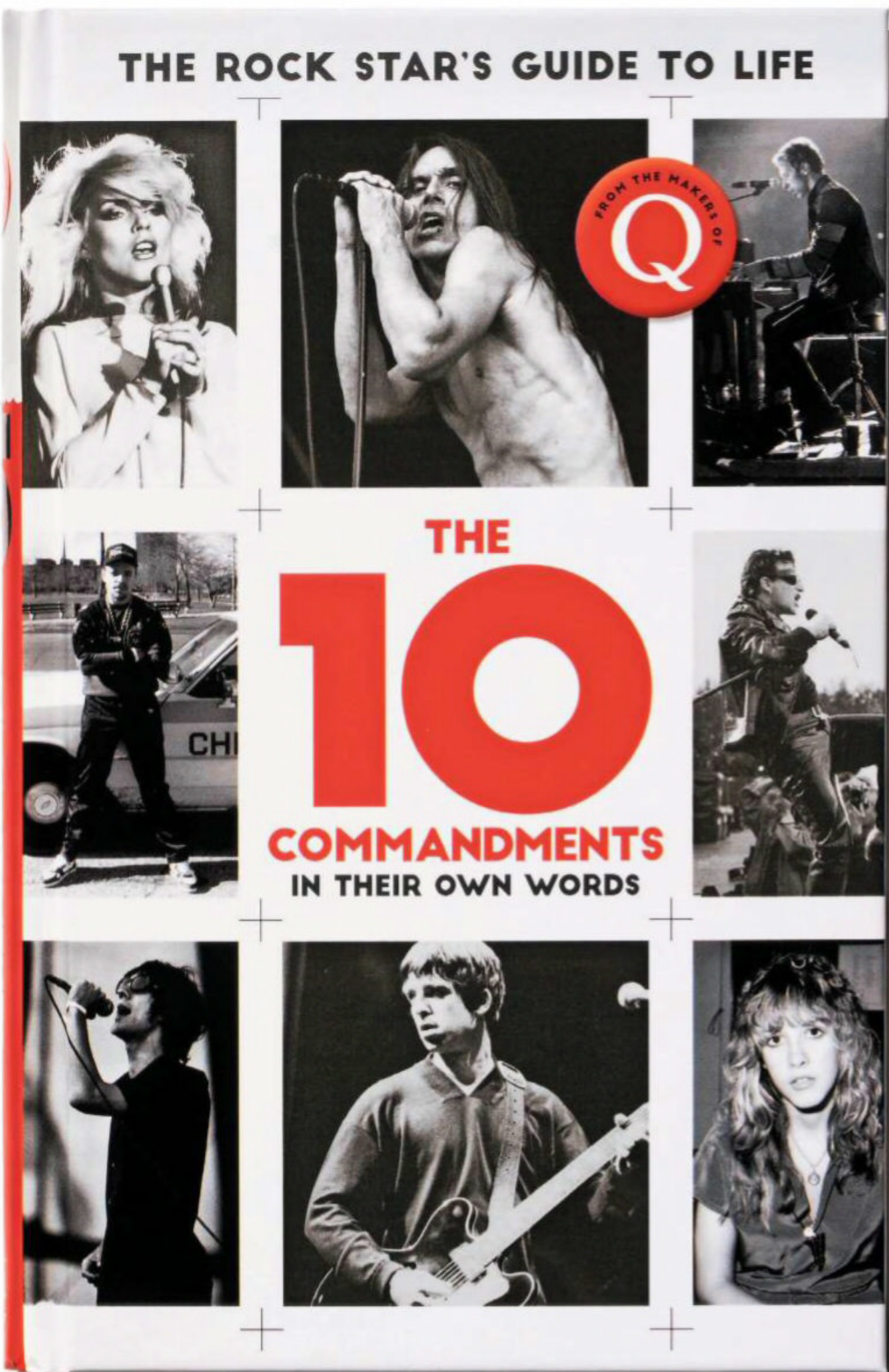
Podcast: Cocaine & Rhinestones is probably the best named podcast ever. You'll love country music's stories, even if you hate the 'twang'.

Online resource/article: Duolingo is a free language learning app, governed by a bossy green owl. My Italian streak is currently 1105 days and counting...

Recipe: A Negroni: one part gin, one part Campari, one part red vermouth. Easy.

Isolation top tip: Always charge your phone in a different room if you don't want to lose the whole day to social media.

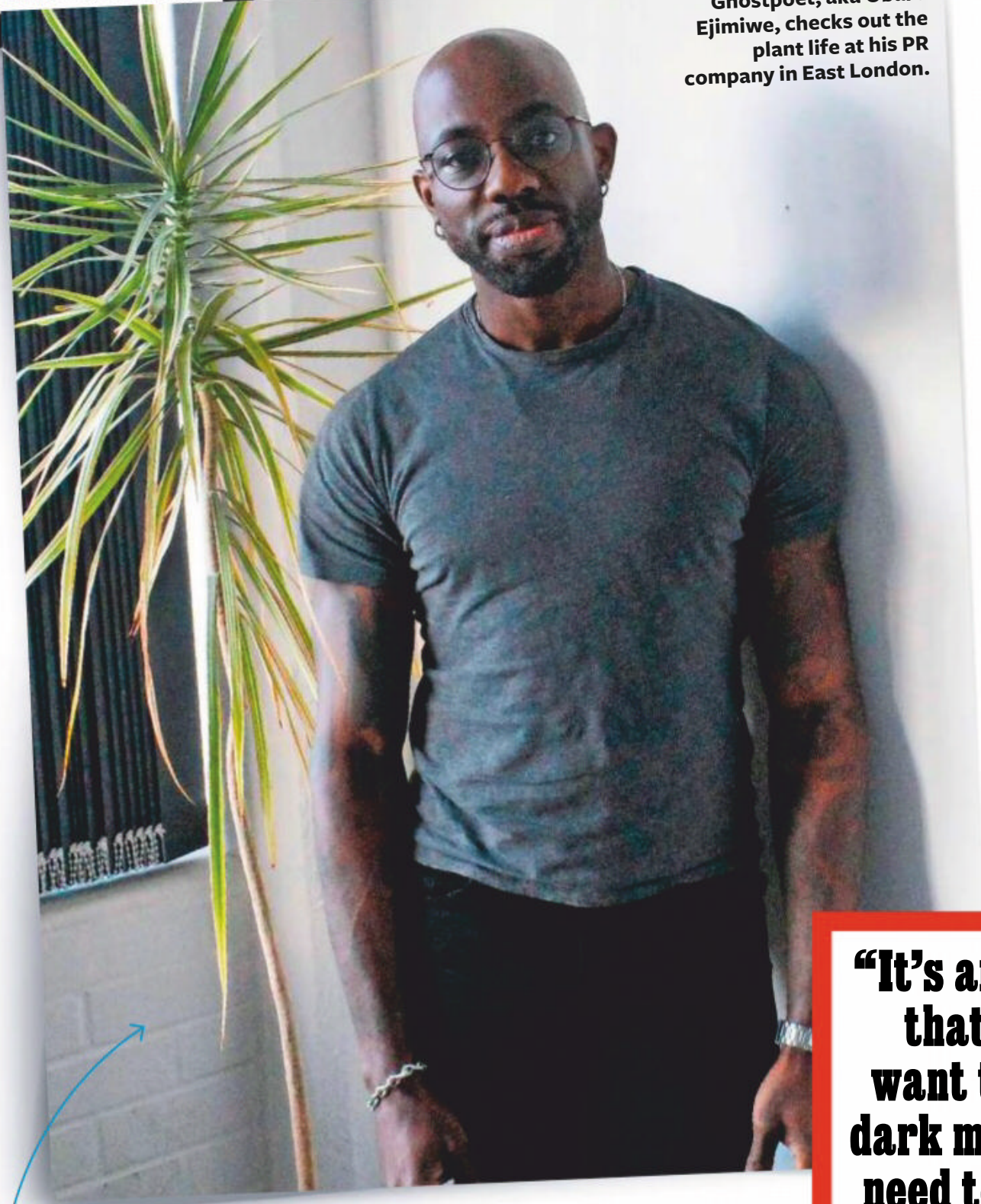
Ten Commandments



From Iggy Pop and Debbie Harry, to Noel Gallagher and Chuck D – **The 10 Commandments: The Rock Star's Guide To Life...** presents the golden rules for living from 50 stars across music's generational spectrum. Packed with lots of brand new interviews, plus some of our old favourites. All are deeply illuminating.

Fifty Musicians ■ Available Now From All Good Book Stores

Ghostpoet, aka Obaro Ejimiwe, checks out the plant life at his PR company in East London.



put down whenever. I think it's a bit of an illusion that if you want to write dark music, you need to do it in the dark.

Are you typically a speak-on-the-phone or text kind of person?

I am both. I think it depends on the circumstance and depends on how quickly I need to get a particular bit of information across. Sometimes it's easier to talk, sometimes it's easier to text.

What's the worst job you've ever had?

I was a painter and decorator in a brothel. That was the worst. I was quite young. I probably shouldn't say where it was.

What sort of shades of paint do they go for in a brothel?

It was the standard magnolia. It was me and this older guy employed to spruce up the place, so we were painting hallways and bathrooms. It was very odd, seeing clients come in and we just had to get on with our job. It wasn't the *worst* job, but it was probably the oddest job. I was an efficient and disciplined painter and decorator.

"It's an illusion that if you want to write dark music, you need to do it in the dark."

You are quite militant on Twitter at pulling people up if they tag your music with a label you don't like. In the past 24 hours, you've told someone off for calling you "trip-hop" and another for calling you "urban". What label annoys you the most?

I can't recall. In the moment, it feels like something I need to talk

about so I say something, then I forget about it. I don't want to stress myself out by constantly thinking about it but I just feel it's important for all artists to be represented how they feel they'd like to be represented. Ultimately, we are the people who make the music so if anyone should know what they're making or how they're making it, it's us.

What's the stupidest thing you've ever bought?

I don't buy stupid things! Everything has its place and purpose. I value the small amount of money that I have so I try to avoid buying stupid things.

Very sensible. What will you be doing in 20 minutes?

Getting some food. That's my next mission.

Enjoy. Thanks for your time, Obaro.

No problem at all. See ya, bye.

NIAL DOHERTY

Where Are You Right Now?

GHOSTPOET

The South Londoner with a sharp line in electronic-tinged rock reflects on the time he redecorated a brothel.

Hello, Ghostpoet, where are you right now?

I'm in the glamorous offices of my PR company in East London. The view's amazing, the plant life is delicious. There's a wood finish here that's inspiring. I might put it into my own property.

Your fifth album is coming out soon.

What was the most annoying thing about making it?

Probably the logistical side of it, which involved me having a large spreadsheet that I had to constantly keep checking to make sure I was recording everything. I saw it done by somebody else and I thought, "Yeah, that's what I need to do to keep everything on track." But it just became an obsession.

So even dark artistry requires serious admin?

Yeah. You know on phones you can get the night-time skin, I tried to make it like that but I couldn't work out how to do it on the spreadsheet. That was probably even more annoying.

The record is titled *I Grow Tired But Dare Not Fall Asleep*. On average, how much sleep are you clocking per night?

Not as much as I would like, if I'm honest. But I'm working on it. With this record, I was working to set hours partly because I was living in Margate and recording in London. I'm not really a fan of working into the night. Any ideas that you have in your mind can be

ALL THE WAYS TO GET YOUR

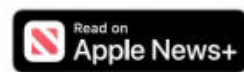
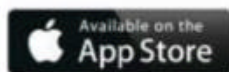


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Breaking

THE HU

Mongolian metal marauders on a mission to save the world.

Iven in the theatre of the outlandish that is Camden Market, the four top-knot-and-tunic-clad men parading through its passageways like stray members of Genghis Khan's rampaging horde draw stares. They are The Hu, and North London is the latest stop-off on their mission to bring the culture and history of their native Mongolia to the wider world via the unlikely medium of modern metal.

"As nomadic people, we respect and love this earth and nature, and as Mongolians, we believe in the eternal blue sky and that good things come from above," says singer Galbadrakh "Gala" Tsendbaatar via a translator, as we sit in the dressing room of the nearby Electric Ballroom, where The Hu will play a sold-out show this evening.

The Hu may cite Western bands such as Slipknot and Foo Fighters as influences, but their debut album, *The Gereg*, is the sound of the Steppes. Galloping anthems such as Yuve Yuve Yu are built around traditional Mongolian horsehead fiddles and three-string lutes, and Gala and co-vocalist Nyamjantsan "Jaya" Galsanjamts's otherworldly throat-singing.

"Singing in Mongolian and throat-singing go hand in hand," says Jaya, who trained with the Mongolian Traditional National Orchestra. "It's hard to do it in any other language."

The shadow of their home country's most famous son looms large over The Hu. Their song *The Great Chinggis Khaan* salutes the bloodthirsty 13th-century warlord who conquered much of Eurasia. So far so Spinal

Tap. But The Hu invert historical infamy to focus on his civilising influence. "Yes, he was a warlord, but he created the first diplomatic passport," says Jaya, who was raised in a nomadic family in Western Mongolia and as a youngster rode horses in traditional sports festival the Nadaam. "The postal service, international trading, religious freedom – these were progressive back then."

The Hu are more than just Horrible Histories as soundtracked by Iron Maiden. Yuve Yuve Yu despairs at the current climate emergency, urging Mongolia's youth to connect with the world around them. "Why are we not taking care of this earth?" says Gala sadly. "Why are younger people not respecting the ancestors? It's a universal message – global warming, the way we treat this world. It's not just a Mongolian problem."

The Hu's merging of East and West has attracted some unexpected fans. Elton John recently FaceTimed Gala to say how much he loved them. European festival organisers have been queueing up to book them, while back home the band have been awarded the prestigious Order Of Genghis Khan – an honour only ever bestowed on 11 people previously.

"We want to share our culture, our music," says Gala, ever the pitchman for his homeland. "Forget about five-star hotels. When you go to Mongolia, you will see five billion stars." From the Steppes to Europe, via Camden Market, The Hu are out to spread the word. *DAVE EVERLEY*

Get This Track:
Yuve Yuve Yu
For Fans Of: Lordi,
Iron Maiden



Taking a bow: (left) The Hu onstage at Electric Ballroom, London; (right, from left) Temka, Gala, Jaya and Enkush hit Camden Market, February 2020.



**“As Mongolians
we believe in the
eternal blue sky
and that good
things come from
above.” **Gala****



MARCO VITTOR

Out to lunch with... JEHNNY BETH

The Savages singer discusses her solo career and drops a few insults over a chicken salad.

Jehnnny Beth takes a seat at a table inside Tempio, a bustling Italian restaurant situated below Temple Chambers in central London, and looks around her. It's a sunny, Friday lunchtime in early March and tables are filling up with giddy diners from the surrounding solicitors' offices. "I wouldn't have chosen here," she says, her accent a mix of native French with a hint of cockney thrown in, overspill from a decade spent living in London. "I would have taken you to Banner's in Crouch End, my old local. But I'm working near here," she explains.

As singer with Savages, Beth is a thrillingly fierce and antagonistic performer but today she chirpily scans the menu and is immediately warm company. "OK, I'm not going to take hours," she says aloud to herself, "I'm just going to go quickly into... chicken salad." She places the menu back on the table. "You know there was this big businessman," she confides, "I don't know

who he was, but he'd always take prospective employees for lunch, deciding if he would hire them depending on how long they would take to decide on their meal."

We'd both be successful applicants today, Beth opting for her salad and me for Chicken Milanese. Time is of the essence. The singer is on her lunchbreak after spending the morning in a studio at her book publisher's office. She's been recording the audio version of C.A.L.M.: Crimes Against Love Memories, a collection of erotic stories she's written that will be released later this year. This

"My initial thought is, 'No, I can't!' But that's just fear and I try not to be led by that."

summer will also see the arrival of her debut solo album, *To Love Is To Live*, a record that moves away from Savages' fiery rock sound and into gothic pop, electronic ambience and haunting balladry.

Beth had mulled over the idea of a solo record while she was touring with Savages and was coerced into action by PJ Harvey, when Harvey insisted Beth open for her at an Eden Projects gig in 2016. "I was like, 'No way, I can't, I'm not ready,'" she recalls. "She was like, 'You've got 10 days, you can do it.' I thought it was a great challenge and I didn't want to say no to her, she's so great and inspiring."

As our food arrives, Beth explains that saying yes to things before you know you can do them is a useful way to test yourself. "My initial thought is usually, 'No, I can't!' But that's just fear and I try not to be led by that."

Although *To Love Is To Live* is for all intents and purposes a solo record, Beth says it was never just her making it. There's a number of collaborators across its 11 tracks, including her boyfriend and long-term artistic associate Johnny Hostile, Nine Inch Nails' Atticus Ross, The xx's Romy Madley Croft and a spoken-word piece from actor Cillian Murphy. "He was a fan of Savages so I reached out to him," explains Beth of the *Peaky Blinders* star's involvement. "He has this intimacy about the way he says things. He made it more personal."

Beth currently lives in Paris, relocating there three years ago with Johnny Hostile, but London still feels more like home to her than the French capital. She moved here from her hometown of Poitiers, western France, when she was 20 and spent the next 12 years here. "I know this city much more than I know Paris, and I have all my friends here."

We finish up our food and it's almost time for Beth to head back and continue recording the audio book. "It's very tiring," she says. "They thought I could do it in one day but I don't think so, there's 12 stories and I've only done two so far. Fucking hell, it's hard!"

Asked if she feels like she's in a scene from *Toast Of London*, she embarks on a full impression of Matt Berry's comedy character

"Bon appétit!"
Jehnnny Beth
prepares to get
stuck into her lunch.





Here's Jehnny!: Beth takes a break from recording her audiobook to dine with Q.

interacting with his nemesis. “Hello, this is Clem Fandango, can you hear me?” “Yes, fucking hell, I can hear you!” she says. “Yeah, it’s a bit like that. It’s more my accent because some words I don’t pronounce the English way.”

We head out into the sunshine and say our goodbyes, before she departs with a bombshell. “You know, you sound a bit like Steven Toast,” she says suddenly. And then she’s off, leaving your writer to deal with the shock of this announcement, laughing to herself and waving goodbye as she strolls down the road. Jehnny Beth might be on a new artistic path but there’s still a bit of devil in her. That old antagonism dies hard. *NIALL DOHERTY*

CAN I TAKE YOUR ORDER PLEASE, MS BETH?



Favourite restaurant?

“Banner’s in Crouch End, London. It’s a Jamaican jerk chicken place. There’s a plate on the wall from Bob Dylan cos he used to sit there. It was my local when I first moved to London, I used to go there a lot and sit in the Bob Dylan chair.”

Culinary speciality?

“I’m really good at baking. Well, I shouldn’t say that I’m really good but I love baking. I was speaking to my TV PR and asking, ‘Is there any way I could go on Bake Off?’ I’d love to do it! I’d be competitive and I think I’d be upset if I didn’t present something good enough.”

Most detested foodstuff?

“I don’t think I hate anything, but I

was a teacher in a British school in Enfield and the food was disgusting. It was pizza and fries and that was it, every lunch! That’s insane! It was a massive shock.”

Death Row dinner?

“Can you really eat when you’re going to die? I know my dessert. I want a Mirabelle plum tart. For the main, probably a ratatouille. They’re both quite homely.”

What food did you miss when you left France?

“When I first moved to London, I didn’t have a lot of money so I think I was missing my grandma’s chicken. My family are farmers and here it was more like Morrisons’ chicken... which is not as good.”

Breaking

JESSIE REYEZ

Meet the Canadian singer who alchemises raw, emotional dirt into chart-topping pop gold.

Gazing out of the window of her London hotel suite, Jessie Reyez has the faraway stare of someone who's seen a lot. "I've done shit," she says, her thick Canadian accent underscored by the lilt of her Colombian roots. Only she's not referring to relationship implosions, the kind detailed on 2017's breakthrough single *Figures* (100m Spotify streams and counting), or the myriad emotional mazes traversed on her debut album, *Before Love Came To Kill*

For Fans Of: Amy Winehouse, Kehlani, Eminem

Get This Track: Figures

Us, but her previous London-based tourist exploits. "We've done London Bridge, and the first time we came we saw the Crown Jewels..." Born in Toronto, the 28-year-old's childhood was tough financially, but her parents instilled in her an ambitious streak early on, one that led to her taking piano lessons at a local music school aged three. "I was bossy as hell," she smiles. "The teacher would be like, 'This is how you do it' and I'd be like, 'No, *this* is how you do it.'" School was a battleground too. "The teachers were always calling the house and telling my mum about my bad behaviour," she huffs. One day, however, the phone rang with positive feedback about a poetry assignment Reyez had poured her heart into.

This new creative outlet soon morphed into songwriting, offering Reyez the chance to "say everything you have to say without getting interrupted".

In her early 20s she landed a place at the Remix Project, an art incubator for at-risk youth in Toronto. It was there that she honed her songwriting skills, ending up in writing camps making songs for other artists. It's a creative muscle she still flexes, with co-writes on Calvin Harris's recent UK chart-toppers *Promises* and *One Kiss*. Even with the escapist freedom of pop, however, she can't help but prod others. "In sessions I'll be like, 'When's the last time you cried?' Then I have the seeds to make

"I make music selfishly. The fact that people connect with my songs is a positive by-product..."

something." It's this love for emotional excavation that's caught the attention of both Eminem (Reyez appeared twice on 2018's *Kamikaze*), and Billie Eilish, who she'll support on her forthcoming world tour.

"People who are able to use happiness as Play-Doh, I respect that – but from far away because I don't get it," she says. Reyez is also unafraid to make the personal political, from jazz-tinged LP highlight *Far Away*'s mention of border walls to 2017 single *Gatekeeper*'s depiction of sexual exploitation in the music industry ("Oh I'm the gatekeeper/Spread your legs..."). While the timing with the #MeToo

movement added extra attention to the song, it was actually recorded 18 months before. "I make music selfishly," she says. "The fact that people connect with my songs after the fact is a positive by-product of something that's like emotional diarrhoea for me."

She goes on to state that no matter the subject matter, self-censorship is not an option. There's a pause and a huge grin appears across her face. It turns out she censored herself just once. She sings a snippet of a bitter, anti-Christmas song that never saw the light of day. "People said, 'You're going to ruin Christmas for so many kids!'" she laughs. Reyez is a lot of things – singer, songwriter, fighter – but she's no Grinch. **MICHAEL CRAGG**

Jessie Reyez: has a healthy disregard for both musical convention and sitting normally.



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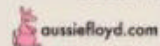
THU 29 SHEFFIELD CITY HALL
FRI 30 HARROGATE CONVENTION CENTRE
SAT 31 NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL

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THU 05 HULL BONUS ARENA
FRI 06 CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA
SAT 07 BIRMINGHAM ARENA
MON 09 NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL
TUE 10 IPSWICH REGENT
THU 12 CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE

FRI 13 BATH FORUM
SAT 14 BOURNEMOUTH INTL CENTRE
MON 16 OXFORD NEW THEATRE
TUE 17 GUILDFORD G LIVE
THU 19 READING HEXAGON
FRI 20 BRIGHTON CENTRE
SAT 21 LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO
MON 23 LLANDUDNO VENUE CYMRU
TUE 24 LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
THU 26 BLACKBURN KING GEORGES HALL
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In The Studio

THE AVALANCHES EMBARK ON A COSMIC TRIP

Sampling masterminds head into the afterworld for third album.

Nothing focuses the mind like a deadline. Just ask The Avalanches. After 2000's acclaimed debut album, *Since I Left You*, the Australian duo took a whopping 16 years to release a follow-up. "Difficult second album syndrome" puts it mildly.

"I remember hitting the 10-year mark and thinking, 'Woah, where does the time go?'" laughs Tony Di Blasi. "Year after year after that it just compounded to the point where it was almost comical."

"Well, we can laugh about it now at least," adds bandmate Robbie Chater. "We wanted a deadline for this record. We learned the hard way what happens if you don't."

Thankfully, the pair are currently holed up in their Melbourne studio sticking to a self-imposed schedule to keep album number three on track. Heavenly lead track *We Will Always Love You* was released in February and features airy vocals from Blood Orange's Dev Hynes mixed in and around a Smokey Robinson sample. It's a good indicator of where The Avalanches' heads are currently

at. Namely, the heavens themselves.

"It started with us talking about things like death, the afterlife, the stars, celestial beings and everything that's out there," says Di Blasi, "and the music has picked up a lot of that." It may sound like New-Age hippy claptrap, but the band's way of thinking was rooted in the realisation that the samples they base their music on are largely taken from artists who have passed away.

"Sampling is our craft. What we're doing is recording people's voices and making representations of the human soul," explains Chater. "Everything crystallised around the idea that the human voice lives on in these recordings."

As well as communicating with those no longer with us, they also started digging out recordings where people have

WHAT WE KNOW

Due: Summer

Title: TBC

Song Titles: *We Will Always Love You, Running Red Lights, The Divine Chord, Reflecting Light.*

Producers: The Avalanches

Recorded At: Sing Sing Recording Studios, Melbourne

Fascinating Fact: The pair's collaborations with Tricky happened after Chater DM-ed the Bristolian rapper on Instagram.

"Eventually our manager emailed us and said: 'Have you been working with Tricky?! I just got a message from his manager!' They freaked out because neither of them knew about it," he says.

"Sampling is our craft": The Avalanches at work on their third album.

claimed to be in touch with the dead.

"There's these special transmitters that people use to try and get the voices of spirits," says Di Blasi. "It's fascinating, you can find them on YouTube."

Some flesh and blood collaborators will appear, too. Weezer's Rivers Cuomo and LA rapper Pink Siifu appear on the dreamy *Running Red Lights*. Tricky worked with





Celestial buddies:
The Avalanches' Robbie Chater (left) and Tony Di Blasi boldly go their own way, Sing Sing Recording Studios, Melbourne, March 2020.

“It started with us talking about things like death, the afterlife, the stars, celestial beings...”

them on several tracks including The Divine Chord, a sweet dollop of spacey pop that also features Johnny Marr and MGMT. Meanwhile, Neneh Cherry and Jamie xx crop up on the expansive cosmic dub of Wherever You Go, which samples the Voyager Golden

Records, the recordings NASA sent into space in 1977 for alien lifeforms to find.

“We spent a lot of time talking to Ann Druyan, who compiled it with her husband, Carl Sagan. They fell in love while they were making it,” says Di Blasi. “They included

a recording of a human heartbeat as part of it and that’s Ann the day before Carl asked her to marry him. This recording of a young woman in love is floating out there in the cosmos forever. I just love that.”

Sending out love, good vibes, great music and voices from beyond the grave – not even the sky is the limit for The Avalanches.

CHRIS CATCHPOLE

Cash For Questions

THIS MONTH: **THE KOOKS**

WORDS NIAL DOHERTY PHOTOGRAPHS GAVIN LI

THE STARS!
PROBED!!
BY YOU!!!

When you were putting together 2017's The Best Of... So Far, were there any hits you wanted to leave off because you thought they were rubbish?

Christina Selley, Taunton

LP: Yes, one hundred per cent. I was surprised when Naïve became a hit. I didn't want to record it at all, I think Hugh convinced me. I didn't see the potential in that song at all even though I thought the lyric was interesting. If you'd asked me, that was the last thing I thought would be the big song and it was the big song. If that song hadn't happened, things would've been quite different. It's a song that bridged the gap between pop and rock'n'roll and has a special place in the world now but at the time I just thought, "We've got way better songs."

Luke, have you spoken to Simon Amstell since that very awkward interview on Popworld?

Lorcan McLaughlin, Strabane

LP: It was a weird time, because that was our first ever interview. He definitely blind-sided us, but funnily enough people really liked it and people still watch it on YouTube. Even initially, we didn't feel any bitterness about it. I've seen him since. He came up to me once and launched into this thing where he said he'd once had sex with someone who thought he was me and he never told them it wasn't, so they've always walked around thinking they had sex with me. I was like, "Cool, man. Great story!"

HH: He basically impersonated you to have sex with someone?

LP: Yeah. Quite strange. Isn't that weird?

HH: And he did a comedy show about us needing psychiatric help?

Who would you invite to a BRIT School reunion?

Cameron Baker-Nate, London

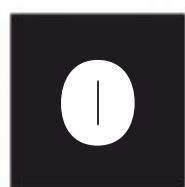
HH: Adele. She was in the year below me. She's fucking hilarious, she hasn't changed at all. She came up to me at BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend with a burger in her hand, going, "Awight, mate!" She's so cool.

LP: There was a lot of competition at the BRIT School.

HH: There was a real competitive spirit and people who were sucked into that nature didn't do well.

LP: It was a very small music class as well, 20 people in each class, so it was very competitive and intense. Leona Lewis was there. I used to play guitar in her band. She'd be invited. Producer Blue May too, he's a great producer and a great guy. There's been a shift about artists who've gone to the BRIT School now >>

The indie-rock trio on getting booed in Germany, going to school with Adele and their trouble with keeping hold of bassists.



f all the bands who emerged in the mid-'00s, The Kooks were the ones who looked most likely to be derailed by mainstream success. Even by the time their debut album peaked at Number 2 in the UK charts, they were already without original bassist Max Rafferty due allegedly to an excess of extra-extra-curricular behaviour. But onwards the band marched and, over a further four albums, they have established themselves as one of the country's most resilient and successful indie-rock bands.

"People say we've had a resurgence but I just think the songs have lasted," says frontman Luke Pritchard, stepping out of a wet Monday morning in central London and into the cosy confines of Bradley's Spanish Bar. "We've had to persevere through some tough times. A lot of people had us out for the count and you have to take that on the chin. But the people who loved our music have stayed with it and it's stayed fresh for them." It's not just those old devotees who've kept Pritchard, guitarist Hugh Harris and drummer Alexis Nuñez in a job, though. A new generation of fans have discovered the band, streaming their songs in their millions and elevating their live shows to some of the country's largest venues. This summer, they will appear at London's All Points East festival, playing to bigger crowds than ever. "There's a lot of support now," says Harris. "We've taken a few knocks and stood our ground." It's the sort of attitude that will hold them in good stead to field queries from curious Q readers...

If The Kooks were a football team, who would they be?

Spencer Rose, Lincoln

Luke Pritchard: Crystal Palace, because they

are always the underdog and they're the team for the people. It's not got the big investment or the big hoo-ha but people love them and they occasionally surprise you. They're my local team.

Hugh Harris: I don't think we're cool enough to be a football team. We'd be a badminton team. Something a bit more alt, like Lewes Badminton Club. More shuttlecocks.

What's the closest you've ever come to splitting up?

Stu Bond, Gloucester

HH: I slapped Luke in the face once. It was a dysfunctional period in our history.

LP: You cracked my rib, too. Me and Hugh have had a few fights.

HH: That was more catharsis, where we gave each other the green light to hurt each other. I think in hindsight there's much nicer ways of releasing your tension than smacking each other on a bumpy tourbus after a bottle of rum. I don't think it did us harm, aside from the physical breaking of bones and bleeding of noses.

LP: For me, personally, the closest was probably when there was a time when our original drummer Paul [Garred] had left and we had this other guy learning the songs on an airplane coming to meet us in Dallas. We did the first three songs and I just walked offstage. I got on a flight to Miami. With Max [Rafferty, original bassist] and Paul, it was very personal and at that point we felt quite let down. Personally it was boiling point, in terms of, "What's going to happen? How can this continue?"

Simon Amstell:
alleged Luke
Pritchard
impersonator?

"We've taken a few knocks and stood our ground." The Kooks (from left, Alexis Nuñez, Luke Pritchard and Hugh Harris) come out fighting, Bradley's Spanish Bar, Fitzrovia, London, February 2020.



"Some people just can't hack it. The lifestyle isn't for everyone. It affects people in different ways, bass players maybe."

Luke Pritchard



“Who mentioned Johnny Borrell?!” The Kooks “had a few pops” from the Razorlight frontman; (below) anyone for crickets?

[King Krule and Black Midi are among the artists who also attended the performing arts college in Croydon, South London] and maybe we were a reason why it changed. Bands like us weren't meant to come from places like that but we did, and we're great.

HH: There were a lot of blurred lines. There were a lot of bands that were manufactured at the time and once you introduced the idea of schooling behind that, people are right to second-guess and question whether your intentions are true surrounding music and writing, so it's fair enough. But we proved them wrong.

You've gone through a lot of bassists. What have you got against them?

Iain Bailey, Liverpool

Alexis Nuñez: It just hasn't worked out!

LP: [Counting on fingers] I think we've had five? Six? The thing is, some people just can't hack it. The lifestyle isn't for everyone. It affects people in different ways, bass players maybe.

HH: Every bass player who's played with The Kooks has been a genius at playing the bass,

but if you can't step up to the lifestyle and everything that surrounds touring an album then it becomes very difficult. It's not for everyone.

AN: They're frustrated guitarists.

What's the most disgusting thing you've ever eaten?

India Boyce, Shrewsbury

HH: I once had semen of cod in Japan. It was milky and salty. I didn't select it, it was ordered during the meal that I had. I used to play this game where I'd think it was quite cool to eat crazy things. In actual fact, it just made me ill quite a lot of the time.

LP: I've had ants and crickets in Mexico. They say it'll save the planet if we can all eat insects, because they're high in protein.

AN: I'm not that adventurous.

HH: Wasn't there one

tour where you ate fried chicken every day?

AN: The first American tour after I joined, yeah. Any fried chicken I could get my hands on. It was the first time I'd toured the States.

LP: We all came back two stone heavier.

AN: My daughter didn't recognise me when I walked in the door.

Do you feel like survivors of the mid-noughties indie scene?

Bernadette Cleary, via Q Mail

LP: It sounds negative, survivor, doesn't it?

I think that we've evolved. We didn't keep doing the same music. We were part of that time but we've taken a lot of risks since.

AN: There are so many bands of that time who've faded away.

LP: The big moment was when we did [fourth album] Listen. We were still in that zone and we went and did a completely different album. It kept us alive. You don't want to be the guy sat in the pub going, “Remember the good old days?”





“Got any pot?” The original Kooks line-up (from left, Paul Garred, Max Rafferty, Pritchard and Harris) in 2007; (right) Hugh’s doppelgänger Paul Dano; (below left) “Kooks” or “Boobs”?



“We overheard Mumford & Sons bitch-talking us. They didn’t realise our bass player was in the back.” **Hugh Harris**

What’s the worst gig you’ve ever done?

Sophie Ellis, York

LP: Coachella was pretty bad.

HH: I threw up in my mouth. I had to swallow it.

LP: Hugh, man.

HH: Sorry. It was quite an emotional and stressful gig.

LP: Another time, there was this punk rock festival and we were in-between a lot of heavy punk bands. Hugh had fucked his hand the night before so I went out and did an acoustic show on my own. I got Euros chucked at me, Zippo lighters. It got heavy, the crowd got really aggressive. Even when I was walking off there were people trying to chuck things at me. That was probably the worst.

HH: Our tour manager at the time thought that the aggression was because we weren’t playing a full band and they were Kooks fans, so he said, “You should go on and show them that you’ve broken your finger.” So I went on with this big bandage on, going *[he waves his middle finger in the air]*, “See, it’s true, I’ve broken my finger.” Then came the Zippos.

LP: So you sparked it off?

HH: One hundred per cent. My fault.

LP: You should’ve just left me to it, man!

What would people say if you released Jackie Big Tits today?

Michael Cartwright, via Q Mail

LP: I think now it would be cool, right? It’s a character from a film. I was talking about it recently with my wife and my sister-in-law. I’ve never experienced anyone getting uppity about it, we still play it all the time. But I think if we released it now, it might be seen as potentially sexist. But if you look at John Lennon or Serge Gainsbourg, they challenged the listener. Sometimes you have to put things out to raise the questions, that’s something people have to remember now, you can’t rush to judge. Things are going in the right direction in a lot of ways, but sometimes it doesn’t mean things going the way you initially think, especially when it comes to writing songs.

Who would play you in a film about The Kooks?

Gail Hughes, Beeston

HH: I’ve been told I look like Paul Dano. He’s my doppelgänger. I’ve been told I look like a cross between him and Will Ferrell.

AN: Kit Harington for me, that dude.

LP: I’ll have Peter Sellers for me please. I like the idea of it being a comedy performance.

Who’s the strangest Kooks fan you’ve ever met?

Jo Court, Canterbury

AN: When I first joined the band, we were doing a show in Japan and there was a girl

who was a really big fan of *[original drummer]* Paul. She was not happy with me, giving me the evil eye.

LP: Didn’t she book the seat next to you on the plane somehow?

AN: Yes. She freaked me out a little bit.

HH: I wouldn’t necessarily say strange... she’s passionate.

LP: No, that’s pretty weird. She was sat next to him on the plane going, “Where’s Paul?!”

What’s the most Spinal Tap thing to ever happen to you?

Scarlet Beck, Norwich

HH: Day to day, it’s Spinal Tap. I can’t even watch that film, it’s too close to the bone.

LP: The venue thing *[of getting lost on the way to the stage]* always happens, of course. If you’re playing a bigger show, to get to the stage, it’s exactly the same.

HH: On our second album tour, for Konk, we had this lightbox which said “Kooks”, but in the font they use at Konk Studios. I was looking at it at Brixton Academy with our then-drummer Paul and he was like, “It just looks like Boobs. It doesn’t look like Kooks at all. It looks like Boobs.” Dave, our manager, had to chill him out, “Well, Paul, don’t let it affect your performance.”

“No, Dave, I’m not going on under a big sign that says fucking Boobs.” And it kind of did look like it said Boobs.

»

Cash For Questions

Who out of you would survive the longest on a desert island?

Benjamin James, Nottingham

LP: Hugh. He's quite resourceful and I feel like he reads and watches enough about survival.

AN: Bear Grylls.

HH: No, it's Ray Mears. If you were stuck with a Bear Grylls-type character, it'd be really fucking stressful, cos he'd be like, "Come on, we're gonna scale this mountain, then we're gonna kill this boar!" Ray Mears, who I relate to a little more, would just make some wine while spit-roasting a badger.

What's the worst thing anyone's ever said about The Kooks?

Ross Barlow, Worcester

HH: Johnny Borrell had a few pops.

LP: It was the time for the pop back then, wasn't it?

HH: He said that our record sounded like we were bending over and waiting for Radio 1 to "eff" us from behind. Which is interesting considering who he's courting currently and what he's trying to resuscitate himself.

AN: It's a lot of bravado.

LP: He said to me afterwards, "Oh, sorry, I never listened to that album."

HH: We overheard Mumford & Sons bitch-talking us in the car. They didn't realise our bass player was in the back of their festival transport.

LP: One of our bass players.

HH: Bass player number two. He overheard it and they were so apologetic.

LP: I mean, everyone slags off everyone else. We ended up doing a song together [at a Swiss festival in 2012] so it was all fine.

HH: Except I wasn't plugged in... God, this is so Spinal Tap.

What are the must-haves on your rider?

Emily G, Derby

LP: A life-size cut-out of Kylie Minogue

Ray Mears: about to rustle up some wine and spit-roast a badger.



"The Spinal Tap venue thing always happens... If you're playing a bigger show, it's exactly the same." Luke Pritchard

has been on our rider for ever.

HH: We've never gotten it.

LP: We should just buy one. When we're in America, we always put that we want a vinyl album each.

HH: And stamped postcards.

What's the weirdest place you've ever heard a Kooks song being played?

Megan Brady, Aberdeen

LP: A strip bar. It was the song Bad Habit.

HH: Bad Habit is in the Peter Rabbit 2 trailer too. Isn't that cool?

LP: If a song can work in a strip bar and Peter Rabbit...

Bob Dylan famously warmed up to your song Ooh La. What other celebrity fans do you have?

Matty Davies, Saffron Walden

HH: Mr X Factor likes us, doesn't he?

LP: Louis Tomlinson apparently, which is nice.

HH: Elton John likes us.

LP: Bob Dylan was an amazing one. The thing with him was unfortunately we never crossed paths and maybe it's just a song thing, but what has been cool is some younger artists, whether it's Catfish And The Bottlemen or The 1975, who've said, maybe just to us, that they liked our record. It's what's kept us alive a little bit.

AN: Bam Margera from Jackass.

LP: He's a big fan, yeah. He proposed to his wife to Seaside.

HH: He came to our show and we were freaking out because we were like, "He's up to something, what's he gonna do, he's gonna fuck with our show!" But he was the nicest guy ever. 🍷

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5 Dec 2020	Cambridge	Corn Exchange
8 Dec 2020	Brighton	Dome
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16 Jan 2021	Manchester	O ₂ Ritz
17 Jan 2021	Southend	Cliffs Pavilion
21 Jan 2021	Leamington Spa	Assembly
22 Jan 2021	Cheltenham	Town Hall
23 Jan 2021	Exeter	The Great Hall
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THE PRICE OF FAME





TONES AND I

Toni Watson shot to mega-global fame in 2019 as the artist
TONES AND I
with her second single, Dance Monkey, a Number 1 in 30 countries. But the exposure for this former busker has been unbearably harsh.
REBECCA NICHOLSON
talks to her about bullying, photo-phobia, P Diddy and why only the tough survive.

B

ackstage in the dressing room of Glasgow's SWG3, just before she plays her first ever show in Scotland, Toni Watson is trying to stifle a yawn, but the yawns just keep coming. "I'm so sorry for yawning," she says, in case I take it personally. "I'm just... I'm awake now. It just comes out of me." The singer, known as Tones And I to the billions of people who have streamed her track Dance Monkey, or watched the video for it, or seen her perform on Ellen or on Jimmy Fallon or on breakfast TV, is fresh from a nap. "And I don't nap. It's weird. Usually I've been up all day, will go to the gym, will go for a walk and get some lunch, and then we'll start getting ready for the show, but to fall asleep like that is *crazy*. Even today, I've fallen asleep twice. Am I really this tired?"

She really is, but anybody who had experienced the year that she has had might be feeling the need for a nap, too. It is nine months to the day since Watson released her first ever single in her native Australia, a bombastic pop banger called Johnny Run Away. Now 26, she had spent a portion of her



Going ape: Tones And I and friends in the promo for the record-breaking Dance Monkey.

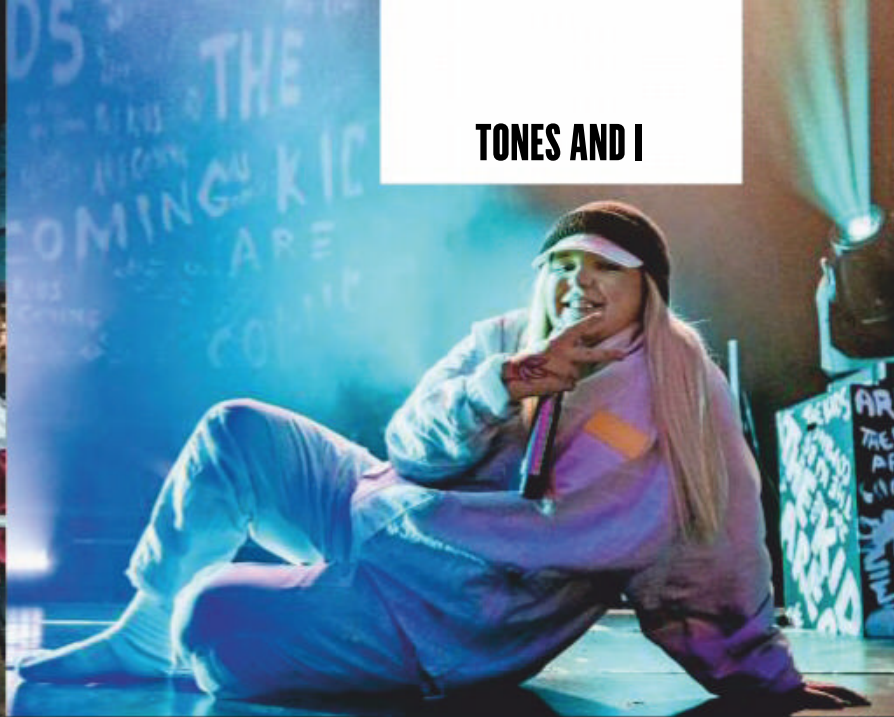
early 20s living in a van in Byron Bay, taking her keyboards out on the street to busk to passing crowds that had started to grow, and then grow some more, giving her an inkling that she might have an audience for her music. For a debut single, Johnny Run Away was a hit, reaching Number 12 on the Australian charts. Her management told her not to be too disappointed if its follow-up didn't do as well.

The follow-up was Dance Monkey, a song she had written about busking, and how drunk passers-by would demand that she perform for them. It quickly became the biggest song in the world, not so much breaking records as demolishing them: it topped the charts in 30 countries, has had over two billion streams and made Watson the longest-running female artist to have a Number 1 in the UK, toppling a previous record held jointly by Rihanna's Umbrella and Whitney Houston's I Will Always Love You. The numbers grew so big, so quickly, that they began to blur into a hard-to-grasp mass of success. I mention that one video has 250 million YouTube views. "It's 750 million," says Watson, casually, then laughs. "But I mean, maybe it was 250 million last weekend."

To say it has happened quickly is the mother of all understatements. Watson is lying on a sofa, wearing a huge orange puffer jacket over a white tracksuit, and a beanie hat over a baseball cap, over the blonde hair that falls on her face. Her eyes are practically covered by the shadow of her cap. "This time last year, I'd just released my first song," she says. "I hadn't released Dance Monkey yet. I was still trying to work it out, trying to get it right."

It must feel like a kind of madness, then, to have one's life change so dramatically, in such a short period of time. Watson has only officially released six songs when we meet, including Dance Monkey and Johnny Run Away, and she has just one EP out, The Kids Are Coming. Tonight's Glasgow gig is the final stop on a brief sold-out UK tour. "I don't even have enough songs released for a whole setlist," she says, though she will plump it up with new songs and a cover of Alphaville's Forever Young. Outside, there's a tourbus waiting, the kind that most artists get after a few years on the job, and it will take her, overnight, to an awards show in London. "Well, I mean, it is very different," she says. "The things which I've done in the last year are some of the craziest things that I never thought I'd ever do." Like what? "I mean, I played the AFL Grand Final, which is like the Australian version of the Super Bowl, and I got to go on the Ellen [DeGeneres] Show and meet Ellen. I met [US rapper] Macklemore, who's my favourite artist. I won Best Female Artist at the Aria Awards and opened the show and won three other Arias as well that night."

"I'm a good person and I'm a good role model, but I'm tough as nails. You don't have to be a pop princess and sing Disney and be super fluffy to be a good role model any more."



TONES AND I



**“G’day, Scotland!”:
Tones And I gets
the party started
at Glasgow’s SWG3,
4 March, 2020.**



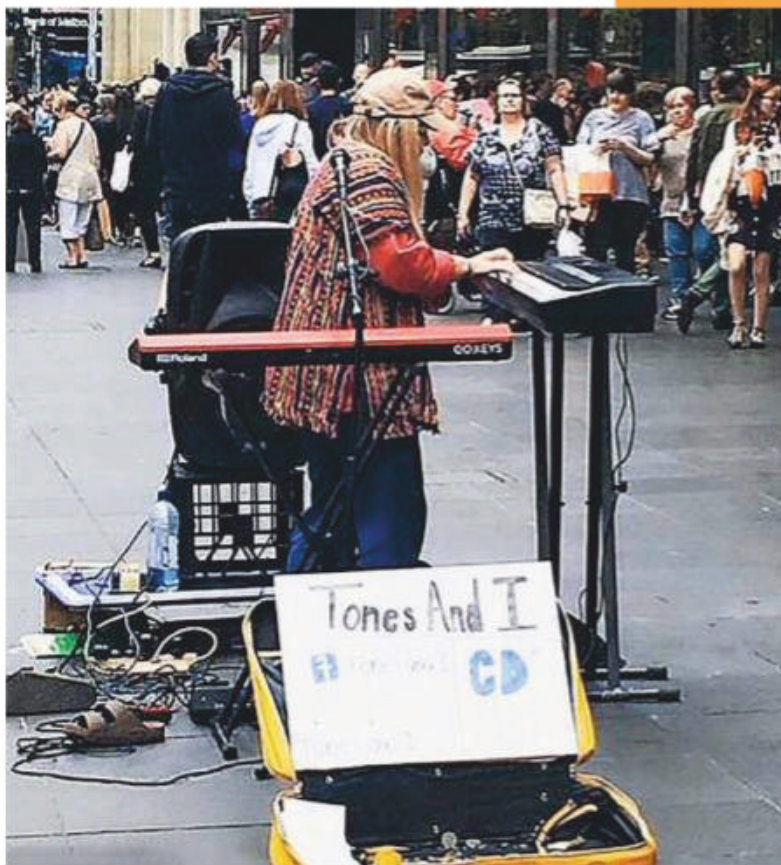
She talks about the numbers, the awards, the size of it, in such a deadpan tone, that it seems like it hasn't quite sunk in. "It does blur, but I do realise it," she says. "I realise it later, when I have time to myself to think. When I'm home and I'm relaxed and I've had a few days off and I can really think about it. Then I take it all in." There is another reason for her drollness, though. "I'm just a really monotone person," she says, smiling, underneath her cap. "It's amazing, and I can't believe my music's getting recognised, but it's like all of a sudden, people want you to be really high-pitched and it's just literally not me. So I always get caught out between either people thinking I'm rude – I'm never being rude – or if I am really high and perky, then me feeling fake, like everything I just said was not genuine at all."

In the video for Dance Monkey, Watson goofs around with her friends, dressed up as an old man. "That is 100 per cent me," she says. The video cost \$800 to make, and was an excuse for her to run amok on a golf course with her mates, having a laugh. "I have the kind of personality that is silly, but also it protected me, the old Tones. That old man protected me from, you know, being really camera shy, and stuff."

Watson isn't keen on having her photo taken, or doing filmed interviews; during the ones that do exist online, you can see her holding her arms across herself, as if an act of protection. She prefers talking on the radio, because she feels she can be herself. "I'm a good person and I'm a good role model, but I'm tough as nails." Not, she clarifies, the sort of tough where she'd "hit you over three dollars." But she is tough. "You don't have to be a pop princess and sing Disney and be super fluffy to be a good role model any more, and that's just who I am."

Last November, after Dance Monkey had truly exploded, Watson posted a message on Facebook, in which she thanked her fans for supporting her, but then revealed that she had been "hiding in a big black hole for a while now". She wrote about how "the relentless bullying that follows every proud moment tears my mind in two... I am going through the best and worst time of my life."

She says now that she doesn't really like to talk about it any more. "But it related to how savage online bullies are. I've already left high school, and I was like, 'Cool, I'm done with that, yay, normal world.' And then you're like, 'Oh my God, I actually am achieving my dreams, everything I ever wanted, I'm working so hard and I'm getting results, and I can say that I'm an artist and I can live off it.' But then the online bullying started, and I was like, 'Whoa, this is way worse than anything I ever experienced in school.'" On a practical level, she made the decision to simply stop looking at social media. "If you don't go on social media, it just disappears," she reasons.



Street hustle: (left) Tones And I busks in Byron Bay, New South Wales, prior to hitting the big time.

The fairytale version of the Tones And I story is that, inspired by a friend, Watson packed in her job in a clothes shop, bought a van to live in, and moved from Melbourne to Byron Bay, to make a go of it as a busker. There, she had a chance encounter with a certain Jackson Walkden-Brown, who saw her perform in Byron Bay, the first time she went out busking. "He walked past me, and said, 'Here's my card.' It said 'entertainment lawyer', and I was like, 'I don't have any legal issues.' He said, 'Just call me.'" She waited three weeks. "I was like, 'What's up?' He said, 'I'm going to help you make a demo CD and you're going to busk full-time.'" He became her co-manager, and she moved in with his family while she worked on her act.

She had always wanted to be a singer. "I've been singing since I was little. Never had a lesson, though, I refused to." Considering Dance Monkey's success, there is little out there about her early life. "I know. That's on purpose, yeah," she says. Some tabloid reports suggested that she had tried out for The X Factor, a few years ago, and she yawns when I bring it up. "I was pretty young when I tried out. I don't know. Just not for me," she shrugs. Why is she so keen on keeping that sense of mystery? "If I needed to talk to anyone about myself as a child or my upbringing, I have friends I can speak to. I don't need to speak to the world and get their opinion," she says matter-of-factly.

She has already heard their opinion, she continues, on social media. "I mean, if I was welcomed with opened arms into the industry, and I wasn't absolutely ripped to shreds to the point where other artists were saying, 'You've really copped it', maybe I'd be

"I am achieving my dreams. I can say that I'm an artist and I can live off it. But then the online bullying started, and I was like, 'Whoa, this is way worse than anything I ever experienced in school.'"



more inclined to opening up, but right now this is about as far as I'm allowing myself to go. Because I haven't been that well-supported in the past. People thought I was just this pop EDM chick that wrote a track in her room, and they didn't bother looking at me or my story, or what I've done and the effort I've put in. They just wanted to hate a song because I have a weirdly high-pitched voice in it. Fine, but I'm not going to tell you one more thing about me then, because you obviously don't care to know."

If this all makes the business of becoming a huge pop star practically overnight sound joyless, then it isn't the full picture. Maybe we should end this chat on a joyful note.

"I know!" laughs Watson. "It's the way I speak, it's so monotonous! I've got a very dry sense of humour as well. I'm like [*'90s animated sitcom character*] Daria." Besides, there is plenty of joy in her life right now. She says she met P Diddy recently. "And I can't even believe I met Ellen, that's just crazy. Like, to have a photo in my house of me hugging Ellen, and to wake up every morning like, 'What's up, Ellen?'"


The last year has been insane, she will admit. Even in an industry that's increasingly unpredictable, this kind of success story never, ever happens. "I know! I don't even know what made it go like this. I don't know what made it this big," she says, smiling. "But I'm not mad about it. Well, I mean, give me a day off. I would like a day off."

Then there's the show tonight. "I'm so excited for it, honestly, I need it," she says, lighting up at the mere thought, waking up, at last. "I cannot believe I'm in *Scotland*."

The Glaswegian crowd that greets her is up for it, lively, happy to be in her presence, giving it the full "here we fuckin' go" chant. Watson comes alive onstage, twirling and jumping and leaping, and it's clear that this is what she loves doing. She may only have six songs out, but she's got plenty up her sleeve, and plenty of stories to tell about them.

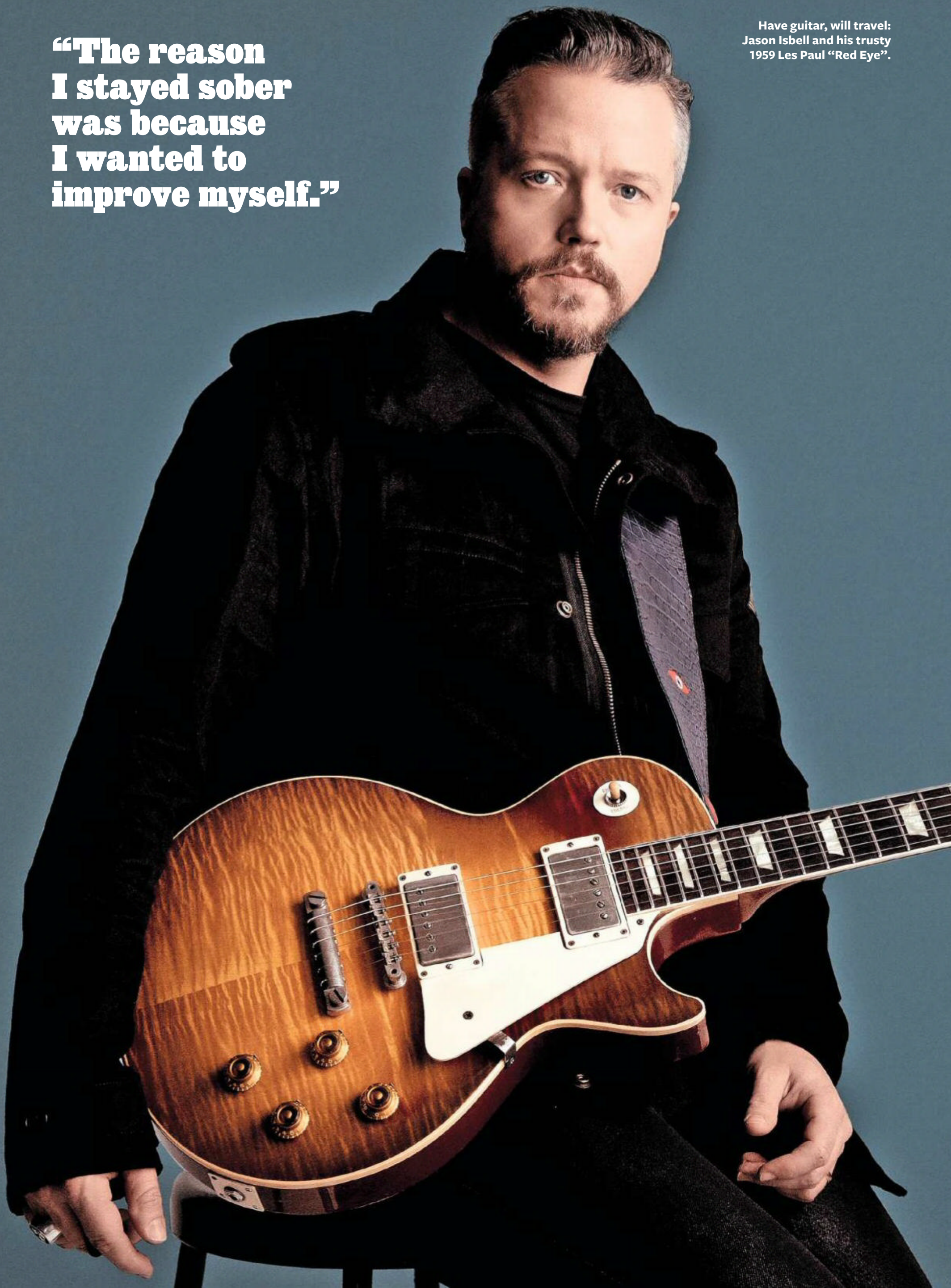
She introduces a new song, as yet unrecorded, with a tale about a recent trip to L.A. A hot-shot producer asked her to feature on a track, but she turned him down.

"I'm really happy to write my own music and be my own musician," she tells the audience. Nevertheless, she took him up on an invitation to go to a fancy party in Hollywood and took a friend along. It transpired quickly that it wasn't their scene.

"We decided to go back to the hotel and order Uber Eats and watch Netflix," she concludes, but hey, she got a song out of it. The crowd loses its marbles. At the end of her short, sweet set, Watson waves them a cheerful goodbye. "Thanks for wanting more than one song," she says, dancing off the stage. 

**“The reason
I stayed sober
was because
I wanted to
improve myself.”**

Have guitar, will travel:
Jason Isbell and his trusty
1959 Les Paul “Red Eye”.



Jason Isbell

The Grammy-winning singer-songwriter and former Drive-By Truckers shares his life lessons.

1 Lay Off The Sauce

I've been sober for eight years now and that's my first priority in order to keep everything else working. I know that's not the case for everyone, but for me the bigger lesson is, "know yourself and know your limits." I get up every day and think, "Whatever happens today I'm not going to drink..." Everything else falls into place after that. If I woke up now feeling like I used to every morning, I would immediately need to go to the emergency room.

2 Don't Lie To Yourself, Or Other People (Within Reason)

Being honest with yourself is sometimes the most difficult thing to do but it's also the most rewarding because then you can really take an inventory of your life and own up to the things that you're responsible for. It makes you able to be honest with other people, too. Now, I have a four-year-old daughter so I can't *exactly* expound on everything in the world to her. I don't want to wind up in a conversation about an episode of Forensic Files with a four-year-old, but I tell the truth whenever possible.

3 Count Your Blessings

If I'm down, I can turn it around by listing the things that I'm grateful for. It puts things in perspective. Just the fact that I was given the opportunity to live for 41 years and do the things that I've been able to do makes all my problems seem small. The more I remind myself of that, the happier I am.

4 Do Your 13-Year-Old Self A Favour

I never wanted to be an astronaut or a firefighter or anything else other than this. Once I realised that there were people out there who played instruments for their job, I was sold. If I were to go back to 13-year-old me and show him the guitars that I have now he would follow any piece of advice that I gave him based purely on my guitars. I have a 1959 Les Paul and a '70s Marshall head that used to belong to Neil Young so whenever I have the chance, I plug it in and turn the knobs all the way to the right just as a service to that kid with his cheap copy guitar and tiny amplifier.

5 Don't Be An Asshole

My behaviour could become the waterline for what my daughter thinks is OK. If she sees me being an asshole to the waiter in a restaurant, fast forward 20 years and she's having dinner with some guy who is being an asshole and she might think, "Ah, that's not so bad, Dad did that." It doesn't just apply to your children, because also in the entertainment world shitty people can write great songs. But I don't want to love that music and overlook those people's bad behaviour.

6 Make Yourself Happy, Then You Can Be A Good Parent, Partner Or Friend

Find your happiness within yourself. It's not my wife's job to make me feel better, it's my job to make me feel better and once I've done that I can be of service to the people around me. I initially went into rehab because of my wife. I thought, "If I keep on living like this she's not going to put up with it..." That made for a good catalyst but the reason I stayed sober was because I wanted to improve myself and I wanted to be happier. You can't make a huge change just for somebody else because then it won't last.

7 Everyone Needs An Editor

When I write a song my wife sees it first. She doesn't use a red pen, but she will go through it and say, "I think this

is a cliché" or "I think this is a bit vague..." A lot of songwriters don't have that. If you're writing a novel you have editors that do probably as much as you do to try and whip it into shape, but most of the time songwriters are just left to their own devices. It's really important to have people around you who say: "I think you can do better."


8 There's Always Somebody Who Has It Worse Than You

When I grew up in Alabama we lived in a trailer in my grandmother's yard. My parents were teenagers and we didn't have a whole lot. I got a little older and I went past a Native American reservation and all of a sudden I thought, "Oh no, I didn't grow up poor, I was fine..." Most of us had some sort of advantage and once you recognise that it makes it easier to sympathise with other people.

9 Vote Like You're Broke

If you're lucky enough to have some success in the world, try to make as many decisions as you can from the perspective of someone who has less than you have. I tell people: "Vote like you're broke." Whether you have money or not, vote like you have no money at all and everybody will wind up better for that.

10 Keep Up With The Kids

I try to stay current but also don't fight the fact that I'm getting older. I'm not going to make an attempt to sound like Billie Eilish or Doja Cat, but I like the fact that I can appreciate music that people half my age are listening to. It keeps me from getting out of touch. A big problem is older people feel isolated from the younger community and feel like they don't understand them. But if you listen to the music that they're making you realise: "OK, they're not that different from me, they just move a little bit faster." 

THOU SHALT COVET THESE FIVE ALBUMS



Carol King
Tapestry

"It's an album that makes me appreciate what it's like to be someone that I'm not."

John Prine
John Prine

"How could he write a song like Sam Stone when he was that young? He was just a kid. It's incredible."

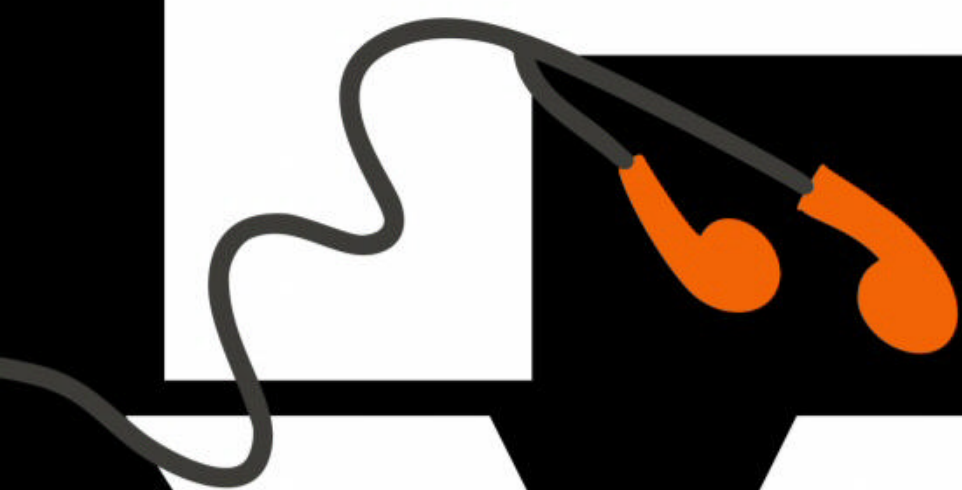
OutKast
Aquemini

"Growing up in the South in the '90s you *had* to have this album."

Bob Dylan
Blonde On Blonde

"This was Dylan needing to stay in touch with what he called the 'thin wild mercury sound'. It was a successful attempt to stay in touch with that wild part of himself."

Prince
Sign O' The Times
"There are people who are great songwriters and great entertainers and great musicians but I don't think all three of those things have ever existed in the same amount in anybody else as much as Prince."



You may currently be in lockdown at home, but the sustenance. **DORIAN LYNSKEY** investigates the most

FOR YOUR EARS



GETTY

world of **PODCASTING** provides escape and mental
rewarding music podcasts to while away the hours with.

ONE OF MARCH'S FEW REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL



was an episode of Reply All, a podcast about internet culture, called The Case Of The Missing Hit. A man called Tyler Gillett approached co-host PJ Vogt to solve a mystery. He vividly remembered a song from the late '90s, down to the tiniest detail, but couldn't find anyone else who did, nor the slightest trace of it online. Had he imagined it? How could a radio hit just disappear? Vogt's search for answers, involving memory, obsession and the madness of the pre-Napster music business, was hailed as "the best podcast episode ever" and "instantly legendary". Vogt suggested that it became "something for anyone who felt stuck and needed something to focus on": a joyful distraction in scary times.

It could only have been a podcast. You couldn't hear Gillett's enigmatic earworm (or at least his recreation of it) in print. The story isn't visual enough for a TV documentary and it's too idiosyncratic for most radio stations. Hugely versatile in tone and form, free to access whenever you want, with bingeable archives for latecomers, podcasts offer a new way to think and talk about music.

Bringing together two audio media feels like a no-brainer but music podcasts were slow to take off. The first online music show, NPR's All Songs Considered, debuted on RealPlayer in 2000, four years before the word "podcast" even existed. "I called it 'a music show, for your computer!'" says co-host Bob Boilen. "That phrase makes me laugh now, but I didn't know of anyone else back then doing an online music show. I just knew that the world was ripe for listening to things at their convenience." Even when the iTunes store popularised the new format in 2005, music was underrepresented. "A lot of people were thinking about it but I feel like it took another 10 years before anyone else really built on it," says Boilen's colleague Robin Hilton.

Well-funded legacy broadcasters such as NPR and the BBC were the first to exploit the format. Hits like Desert Island Discs and Soul Music are primarily radio shows, although podcasting has given them global reach and infinite shelf life. Next up were podcast specialists such as Radiotopia, home of Song Exploder, and Spotify,

which has invested in original series such as Stay Free: The Story Of The Clash. Then there are celebrity hosts such as Rick Rubin and Malcolm Gladwell, who ransack their enviable address books for A-listers to interview on Broken Record.

But one of the form's advantages is that you can make something great in a bedroom or basement with just a laptop and a decent microphone. "They're the Do-It-Yourself format," says Lucas Hare of the Bob Dylan podcast Is It Rolling, Bob? "The best – and worst – thing about podcasts is that anyone can do one."

Many of the best are solitary labours of love, funded by Patreon donations. The intimacy of podcasting, says Hare, means that hosts can feel like good friends. "There are family members whose voices I hear less frequently than podcast hosts. They become comforting presences in your life."

Podcasts lend themselves most easily to conversation. James Acaster, whose forthcoming BBC Sounds series Perfect Sound Whatever tests his theory that 2016 was the best music year ever by discussing key albums with fellow comedians, cites old-school chat kingpin Michael Parkinson as an influence. "Now on chat shows they're trying to make a clip that goes viral but I like getting lost in a long conversation," he says. "Podcasts are where that exists now. They don't have to be in-your-face. It can just be a nice chat."

More analytical podcasts such as Strong Songs and Dissect,

meanwhile, constitute a dynamic new form of music journalism which allows you to hear the songs under discussion. "When I was a blogger, I found writing about music to be surprisingly difficult," says Strong Songs host Kirk Hamilton. "It's so much easier if I can have an instrument on hand and play excerpts."

A third category, which includes long-form narratives, deeply reported investigations and documentary anthologies, taps the podcast's enormous potential for storytelling. "When listeners press play, it's their mind working within the audio world you've created that breathes life into the story," says Tyler Mahan Coe of the popular country music history series Cocaine & Rhinestones. "They bring their own imagination to the table."

What unites all the best podcasts is a passionate impulse to explore what music means to us, whether emotionally or culturally. Now that the music industry has abruptly entered an ice age, they can help to plug a vast hole in the landscape. "Music – and the companionship of music conversation – is one of the few things bringing people some real comfort right now," says Robin Hilton. Music podcasts have always been enjoyable, but right now they feel like a lifeline.

"Music – and the companionship of music conversation – is one of the few things bringing people some real comfort right now."

Robin Hilton, All Songs Considered podcast





Song Exploder

(Radiotopia, 2014-)

The pitch: Musicians take apart their songs and, piece by piece, tell the story of how they were made.

The story: “The creative process isn’t only about big ideas,” says host Hrishikesh Hirway, a musician himself. “It’s also an accumulation of small ideas, tiny bits of inspiration, failed attempts, and problem solving.” Hearing the likes of Lorde, Wolf Alice and U2 share a sketchy demo or isolated vocal track is as close as you’ll get to being inside the studio. Each addictively bite-sized episode tells a different story about creativity. “It’s taught me that there is no ‘correct’ way to make a song,” says Hirway. “You just have to do the best you can with what you’ve got, all the time.”

Start here: The epic journey of Vampire Weekend’s Harmony Hall from mumbled 2011 Voice Memo to final mix.

Try this: Broken Record. Rick Rubin and Malcolm Gladwell get big names to open up.

Song Exploder tells the epic story of how Vampire Weekend’s Harmony Hall came to be.



Cocaine & Rhinestones

(Independent, 2017-)

The pitch: The true history of country music.

The story: “I’ve heard these stories my whole life,” says Tyler Mahan Coe before each episode. “As far as I can tell, here’s the truth about this one.” The son of Nashville maverick David Allen Coe, he tells stories that have been “misrepresented, misreported or misunderstood” and his charismatic, up-close yarn-spinning (he records alone in his basement at night) makes them irresistible. Researching, writing, recording and editing each episode takes up to 100 hours, which explains both why Season Two is overdue and Season One is such a treasure trove. “I’m bringing this music, and the people who made it, back to life for a world that thought it could no longer relate to these things,” says Coe.

Start here: The story of Loretta Lynn’s The Pill is a masterclass in social history.

Try this: Disgraceland. Where rock’n’roll muckraking meets true crime.



There must be an angel: Kanye West gets unpacked on Dissect.



Dissect

(Spotify, 2016-)

The pitch: Dissect selects a single iconic album per season, and unpacks the lyrics, music and meaning of one song per episode.

The story: Music college graduate Cole Cuchna was working for a coffee company when he started Dissect in his Sacramento garage to share his obsession with Kendrick Lamar’s To Pimp A Butterfly. Subsequent series have unpacked albums by Kanye West, Frank Ocean, Lauryn Hill and Tyler, the Creator. “We’re speaking about recent history in a way that’s typically reserved for history books,” says Cuchna. He hooked up with Spotify in 2018, but his distinctive tone – smart, passionate, idealistic – hasn’t changed. “Hopefully you come out of a season knowing a little more about the world we live in, and a little more about yourself as well.”

Start here: Kanye’s Power explained via Beethoven and Greek mythology.

Try this: AlbumtoAlbum. Journalist Arsalan Mohammad’s fantastic voyage through David Bowie’s back catalogue.



Soul Music

(BBC Sounds, 2000-)

The pitch: Tributes to the life-changing power of enduring classics.

The story: Radio 4’s beloved institution launched 20 years ago with an episode on Elgar’s Cello Concerto and its 28th series recently concluded with (Sittin’ On) The Dock Of The Bay. The capacious remit is music that moves people, whether it’s The Cure’s Boys Don’t Cry or Auld Lang Syne, and each episode’s thoughtful collage of voices (artists, critics, fans) invites a deeper appreciation of even the most overplayed songs: you’ll never hear Carole King’s You’ve Got A Friend the same way again. Crafted with love and patience (one episode on Wagner took five years to complete), it’s perhaps the only music podcast that regularly reduces listeners to tears.

Start here: Hallelujah (Season 20).

Try this: Desert Island Discs. The show launched in 1942 and has become a podcast sensation. >>

PODCASTS

Strong Songs on Queen: you'll never hear Bohemian Rhapsody the same way again.



Strong Songs

(Independent, 2018-)

The pitch: Classic songs broken down to a subatomic level.

The story: "Everyone likes music, but a lot of people don't have the tools to really articulate why they like what they like," says trained jazz musician Kirk Hamilton. "I want to lend my ears to listeners, and help them hear what I hear." When he piloted the concept with his pet theory about the popularity of Toto's Africa, Hamilton found an audience for his cheerfully accessible brand of musicology, which leaves you feeling much cleverer without bamboozling you with jargon. Tunnelling deep inside songs ranging from Bohemian Rhapsody to Single Ladies, Hamilton is the music teacher you wish you'd had. "It takes me back to music school, when my friends and I would just sit around and listen to music together," he says.

Start here: The Paranoid Android episode is genuinely mind-expanding.

Try this: Switched On Pop. Top 40 hits get the highbrow treatment.



Sodajerker On Songwriting

(Independent, 2011-)

The pitch: Conversations with the world's most successful songwriters about their craft.

The story: Songwriters love to talk shop, especially with two amiable Liverpoolians who are in the business themselves. "To our surprise, nobody else was doing anything like it in 2011," says Brian O'Connor, who co-hosts with songwriting partner Simon Barber. "We don't ask impertinent questions about their private lives. We just want to know what makes them tick creatively. Often that's extremely refreshing for them." The duo's relaxed, respectful style elicits insights into a range of approaches, from Paul Simon's perfectionism ("OK isn't OK"), to Noel Gallagher's merry pillaging ("Most people with a good record collection could do what I do").

Start here: The one at home with Sting and his guitar epitomises Sodajerker's easygoing charm. "He called us nerds," says O'Connor. "That's praise indeed."

Try this: And The Writer Is... Songwriter Ross Golan talks to fellow hit-makers.



Slow Burn: Season 3

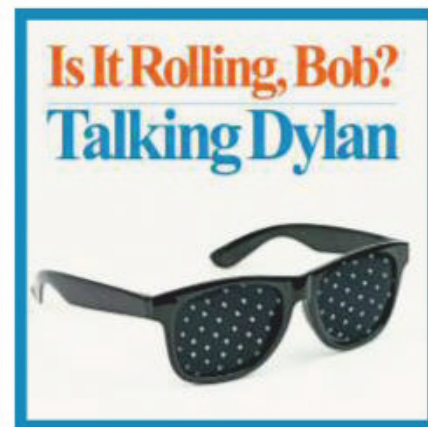
(Slate, 2019)

The pitch: A deep dive into the deaths of Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls.

The story: The first two seasons of Slate's breakout hit covered notorious White House scandals. The third, presented by Joel Anderson, applies the same method – fresh and counter-intuitive angles on a familiar saga – to the murders that traumatised hip-hop. Emphatically not a whodunnit, Slow Burn frames the killings as an American tragedy which takes in police brutality, media hysteria, criminality, misogyny and conspiracy theories, without losing sight of the two gigantic personalities at its centre. Whatever you thought you knew about hip-hop's bloodiest chapter, Anderson tells you something new. The gold standard in long-form audio music journalism.

Start here: Cops On My Tail, about hip-hop's vexed relationship with the police, typifies the show's panoramic scope.

Try this: Dolly Parton's America. Extraordinary eight-part ode to a divided land's "great unifier".



Is It Rolling, Bob? Talking Dylan

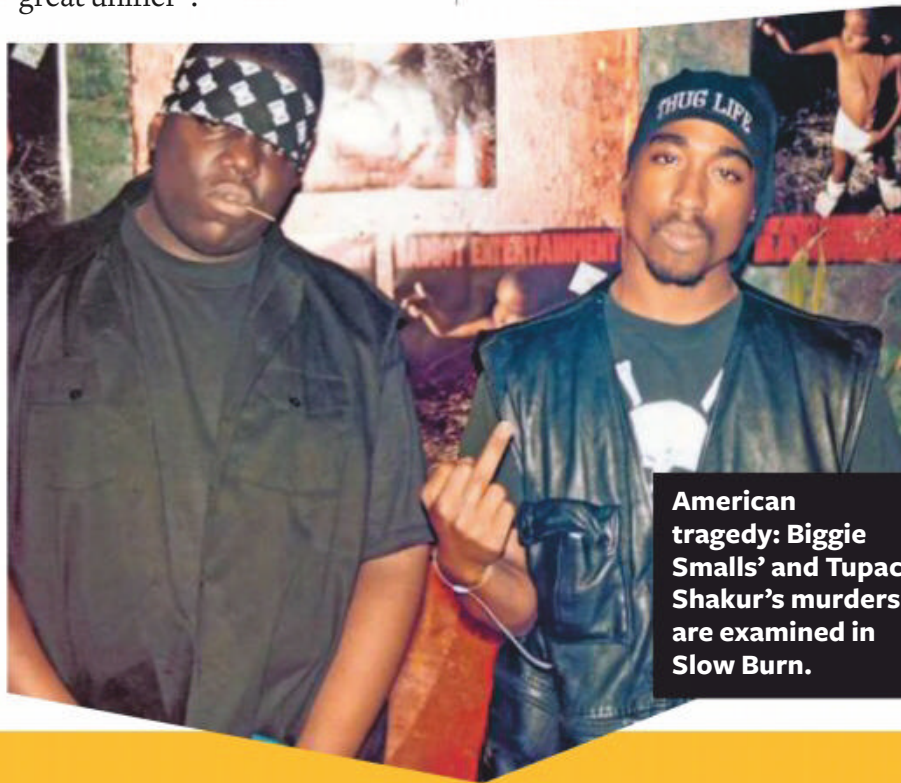
(Independent, 2018-)

The pitch: Two actors talk to interesting people about Bob Dylan.

The story: When Bob-mad actors Lucas Hare and Kerry Shale noticed that shared fandom always broke the ice with new people, they launched a podcast in which actors (David Morrissey), writers (Neil Gaiman) and musicians (Kathryn Williams) could talk about the role Dylan has played in their lives. More popular than he ever expected, the podcast has been an education for Hare. "The more I do it, the more my opinion doesn't matter a damn. I'm so far beyond what's right or wrong, or what's the best song. It becomes less about Bob Dylan and more about the people. If the person is interesting, then the discussion is."

Start here: Hare recommends Billy Bragg. "It's our longest episode. He was such good value."

Try this: Hip Hop Saved My Life. Romesh Ranganathan gets celebrity rap buffs to wax lyrical. 



American tragedy: Biggie Smalls' and Tupac Shakur's murders are examined in Slow Burn.

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A man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit and tie, is gesturing with his hands. The background is pink with black abstract lines and musical notes.

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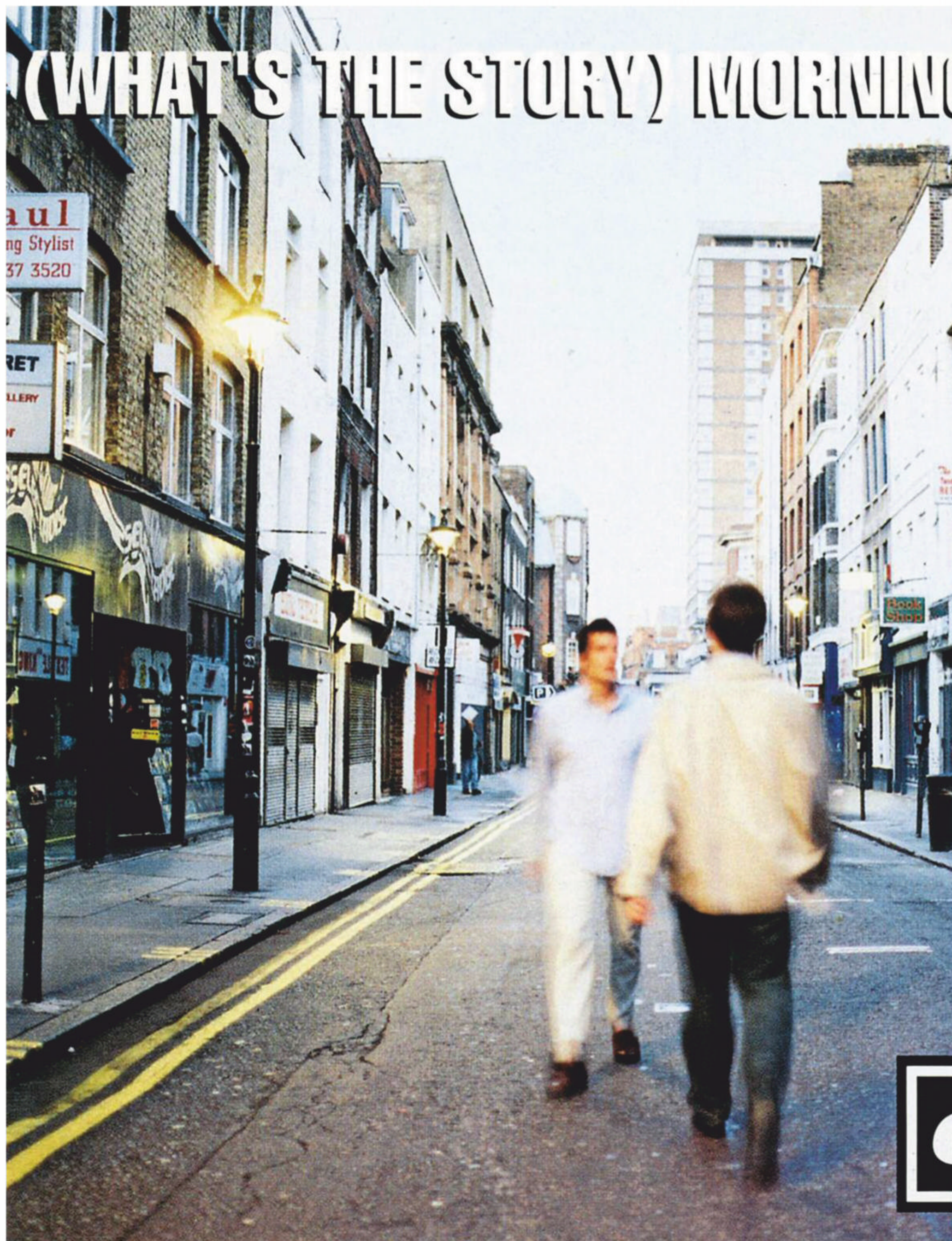
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**Walking
To The
Sound
Of
Your
Favourite
Tune...**

**(What's The Story)
Morning Glory?**

**25th
Anniversary
Extravaganza**



(WHAT'S THE STORY) MORNING



MICHAEL SPENCER JONES

Sleeve Notes

Behind **Michael Spencer Jones's** famous (What's The Story) Morning Glory? cover shot.

Location: Berwick Street, Sunday, 23 July, 1995

Michael Spencer Jones: "It was very much a trust thing with the artwork for Oasis. Sometimes Noel would have an idea about something and then that idea would change and get tweaked. Morning Glory was quite tricky. The initial idea was that Noel had said the album sounded like 'riot music', so I was thinking, 'Right, how can you have a visual representation of riot music?' Then you'd hear tracks like Cast No Shadow and Wonderwall and it was like, 'Hmm, I think we're going down the wrong road here guys!'"


"We got to a point where we wanted a morning scenario and it developed into two people coming home from a nightclub. Originally Noel and Liam were going to be on the cover but in the end that didn't happen for various reasons. When I was doing a recce in London, one of the shots was on Berwick Street. We looked up and there was the sign for Noel Street. It was a sign from upstairs – this is the location guys!"

"It was taken on Sunday morning at about four o'clock with Brian [Cannon, Oasis sleeve designer] and [DJ and band associate] Sean Rowley. The night before the shoot we'd been up at the Kensington Hilton and we all decided that because it was an early start there was no point going to bed. So we stayed up all

"The cool thing about the cover is its ambiguity; it's like, 'What's happening?' There's no moral perspective."

night and you can imagine the state we were all in. The myth was that it's Owen [Morris, producer] in the background holding up the master tape of Morning Glory. He's in fact holding up the master tape for Champagne Supernova, not the whole album. He'd taken it out of the studio, which is breaking all protocol. We were like, 'Fucking hell, if you leave that in the back of a cab or on the fucking Central Line then that's Champagne Supernova lost!'"

"There were some subliminal influences that crept into the sleeve. Bob Dylan's The Freewheelin'... and also [Pink Floyd's] Wish You Were Here where they're shaking hands and one of the guys is on fire. There's that kind of two-guys duality thing going off on Morning Glory. There's a surrealist element with the back of the head where you never get to know what that person looks like which was Magritte's thing. The cool thing about the cover is its ambiguity; it's like, 'What's happening?' There's no moral perspective. It was just a completely ambiguous moment. It might not have had that if Liam and Noel were in it."

"Of all the covers I did for Oasis that was the most difficult one. The knowledge of following up the Definitely Maybe cover and knowing how great the music was. But in the end that ambiguity and the hint of surrealism works for that record. To this day, the amount of stuff I see of people on social media walking down Berwick Street, it's become like Abbey Road." 



Michael Spencer Jones: "Berwick Street has become like Abbey Road."

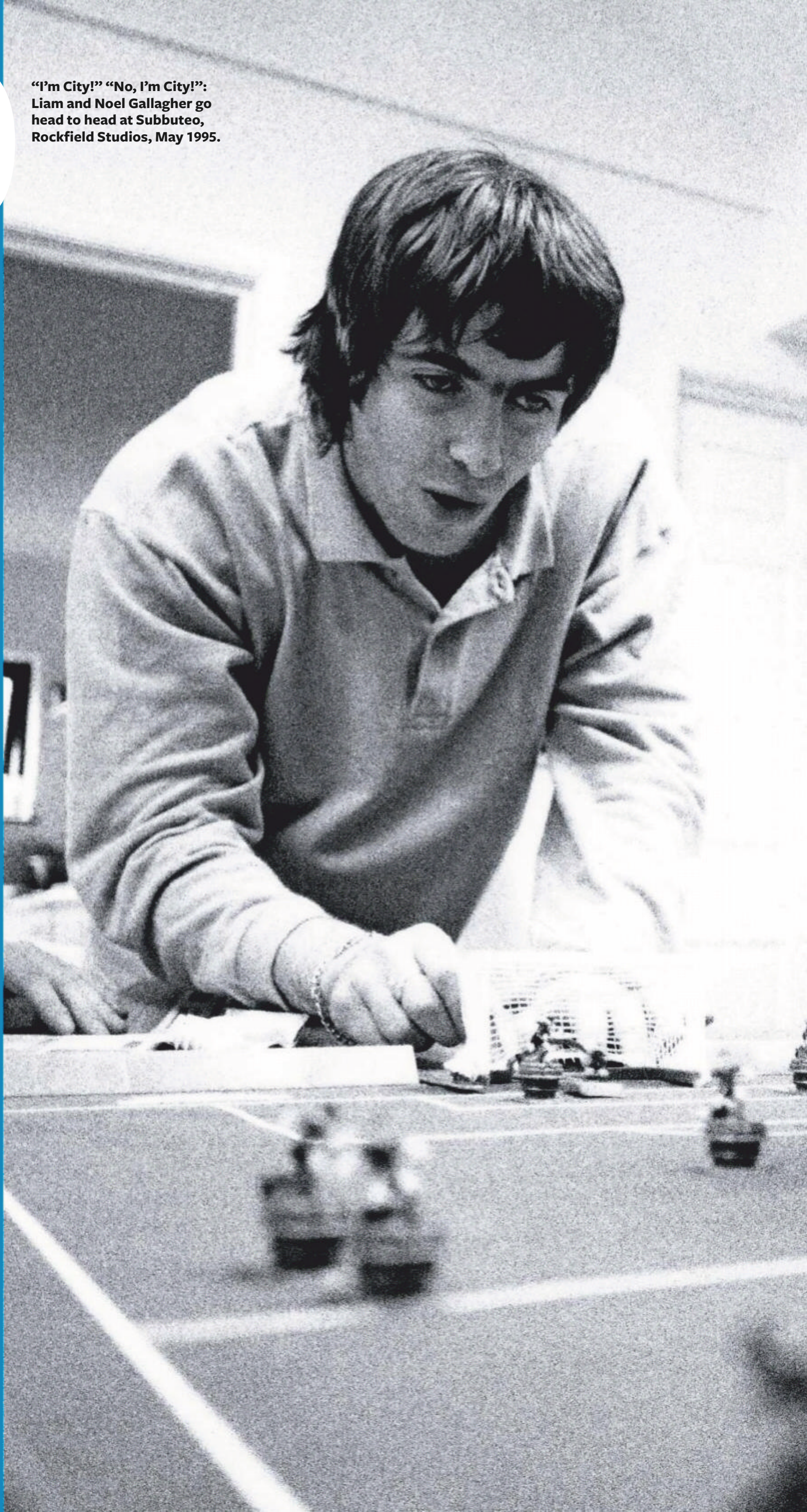
WORDS: CHRIS CATCHPOLE

>>

Warriors

(What's
The
Story)

“I’m City!” “No, I’m City!”:
Liam and Noel Gallagher go
head to head at Subbuteo,
Rockfield Studios, May 1995.



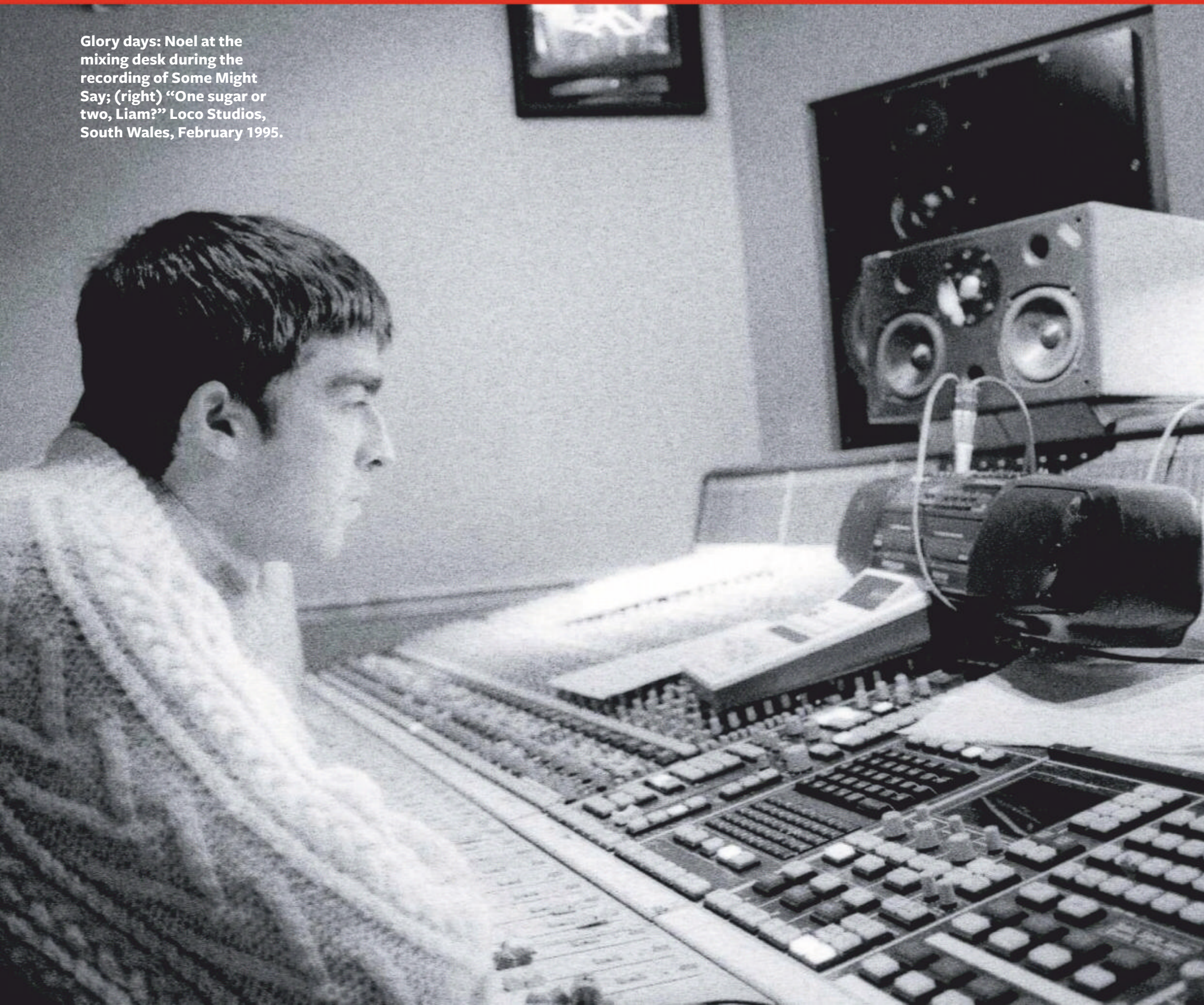
MICHAEL SPENCER JONES

FOR YOU

**25TH
ANNIVERSARY
SPECIAL**

It's the fifth biggest-selling UK album of all time, containing national anthems that will long outlive its authors. But as it arrived just 14 months after its predecessor had kicked the door open for Oasis, (What's The Story) Morning Glory? appeared to little fanfare. That soon changed. Hamish MacBain tells its inside story, track-by-track...

Glory days: Noel at the mixing desk during the recording of Some Might Say; (right) "One sugar or two, Liam?" Loco Studios, South Wales, February 1995.





It is, of course,

the Oasis album with statistics to make your eyes water. Still the fifth biggest-selling UK album of all time – outstripped only by a pair of Greatest Hits albums (Queen, ABBA), Sgt Pepper's and, most recently, Adele's 21 – it has sold more than 22 million copies worldwide: almost three times as many as either Definitely Maybe or Be Here Now. But more importantly, it is the album which contains the songs that you and everyone you know – Oasis fan or not – knows every last syllable of. The songs that will continue to be bellowed by arm-in-arm people of all ages at closing time; murdered by buskers in town squares the world over; and clutched to the hearts of those who have not yet even been born. The songs that, even more so than Live Forever, really will live long, long after everyone involved in making them has passed away.

So it is therefore strange to consider that, on its arrival a quarter of a century ago, (What's The Story) Morning Glory? was perhaps the least “highly anticipated” of all Oasis albums. Such was the velocity of the Oasis train in late 1995 and so frequent were the newsworthy events

involving the band that it just kind of... appeared. “Highly anticipated”, Noel Gallagher knew from watching The Stone Roses squander their moment in time over five long years between classic debut and somewhat-out-of-step follow-up, can kill you dead. Better to follow the template set by his other Mancunian idols The Smiths and get a second album out (almost) within a year. And despite pre-release reviews that were almost universally lukewarm, despite a lead-off single that came second in the most infamous chart battle that music has ever seen, the tactic worked magnificently.

Largely recorded in just over two weeks at Rockfield Studios – where an in-residence Roses had struggled through the making of Second Coming – the songs, specifically the ballads, soon took on the kind of unforeseeable life of their own that only the masses can instil. By the end of that year, Wonderwall, Don't Look Back In Anger and Champagne Supernova had pretty much become the inescapable part of British life that they remain to this day. Definitely

Maybe had been an album for the cool kids, an album that would inspire a large percentage of the people who bought it to grow their hair and pick up a guitar. But (What's The Story) Morning Glory? was the point at which, to borrow Noel Gallagher's phrase, “the squares came on board”.

In the '80s, someone once opined that, at some point, Michael Jackson's Thriller went from album to household appliance: as essential to any home as a kettle. In 1995 and 1996, in the United Kingdom, the second Oasis album ascended to this rarefied status (to this day, in fact, it has shifted more copies at home than Thriller). And in doing so, it allowed its creators to begin living the life about which they had fantasised on the dole only 18 months previously. (What's The Story) Morning Glory? was to be the album that turned Oasis into bona fide, big coat and shades-wearing, blacked-out Rolls-Royce-riding, half hourly white line-inhaling, red top-shifting, bigger stadiums-than-anyone-else-shaking rock'n'roll icons. Or as the man who wrote it so perfectly put it: “Definitely Maybe was written about being young, and about looking at the world like a huge great big fucking playground...Morning Glory was about being in that playground.”

>>

Track 1

Hello

As evidenced by debut single Supersonic's straight-off-of-My Sweet Lord guitar solo and, even more overtly, the T.Rex lift that powered Cigarettes & Alcohol, brazen pilfering of rock'n'roll's past was nothing new for Oasis. But even by these standards, ...Morning Glory took things up a level. There was the Imagine piano intro to Don't Look Back In Anger; the With A Little Help From My Friends outro of She's Electric. An entire song – the Noel-sung Step Out, which would have sat between Some Might Say and Cast No Shadow – was cut at the last second (despite appearing on advance promo CDs) because it was, as far as Stevie Wonder's lawyers were concerned, far too close to their client's Uptight. But the opening song, with its outro's excerpt of Gary Glitter's Hello, Hello, I'm Back Again, made it through. Written towards the very end of the Definitely Maybe sessions – you can tell – Noel Gallagher started singing the Glitter bit when showing it to the band “and everyone just fell about laughing. As the track progressed, we found we couldn't get rid of it, so we stuck it in.” Three years later, of course, the idea of referencing Gary Glitter would suddenly feel a great deal less fun, but at the time, as a pick-me-up coda to a slightly darker, more paranoid tone – “It's never gonna be the same”, sings Liam over squalling wah wah guitar – the refrain felt perfect. And anyway, these days, as the producers of the film Joker were last year at pains to point out, Glitter no longer receives royalties on his songs. So anyone beyond those 22 million people thinking of shelling out for the second Oasis album can do so with a clear conscience.

Track 2

Roll With It

It's impossible to talk about the lead single from ...Morning Glory without mentioning Blur, Country House and the so-called battle of Britpop that, prior to their comprehensive winning of the war, Oasis lost. It was Blur who moved their single back a week to instigate the clash, and the single CD release of Roll With It was always going to struggle against Blur's 2CD release: a then-common, none-more-'90s marketing that essentially

encouraged hardcore fans to buy the same single twice. The leaders of both bands, meanwhile, would over the years both bemoan the fact that neither single was their finest hour. But whatever: exposure-wise it did neither party or the scene fast coming up around them any harm. It was fun. It was a lead item on the six o'clock news. Featuring newly installed drummer Alan White's very first take on any song and a gloriously drunk and direct solo from Noel, Roll With It typifies more than any other recording the get-up-and-go, un-thought-out immediacy of Oasis at this point in time. And as anyone who ever got to see them play it in a stadium will attest, it was as effective a moshpit-instigator as Noel Gallagher ever wrote.

Track 3

Wonderwall

The very week before Definitely Maybe came out in August 1994, another British album that would prove, over time, to be equally if not more influential was released. Portishead's Dummy was characterised by shuffling beats and moody strings, was admired by Noel, and its influence bled into the off-kilter drums and cello (or technically Mellotron tape-playback keyboard) arrangement of what would quickly become, and remain, the most well-known Oasis song. Famously, when Noel Gallagher presented it to the band, complete with dubbier-than-usual bassline, his younger brother was not enthused, proclaiming that Oasis “are not a funk band”. And while in reality it was perhaps not that much of a departure, in contrast to the song that followed it both in the tracklist and as a single, Wonderwall on arrival did feel much more low-key and off-

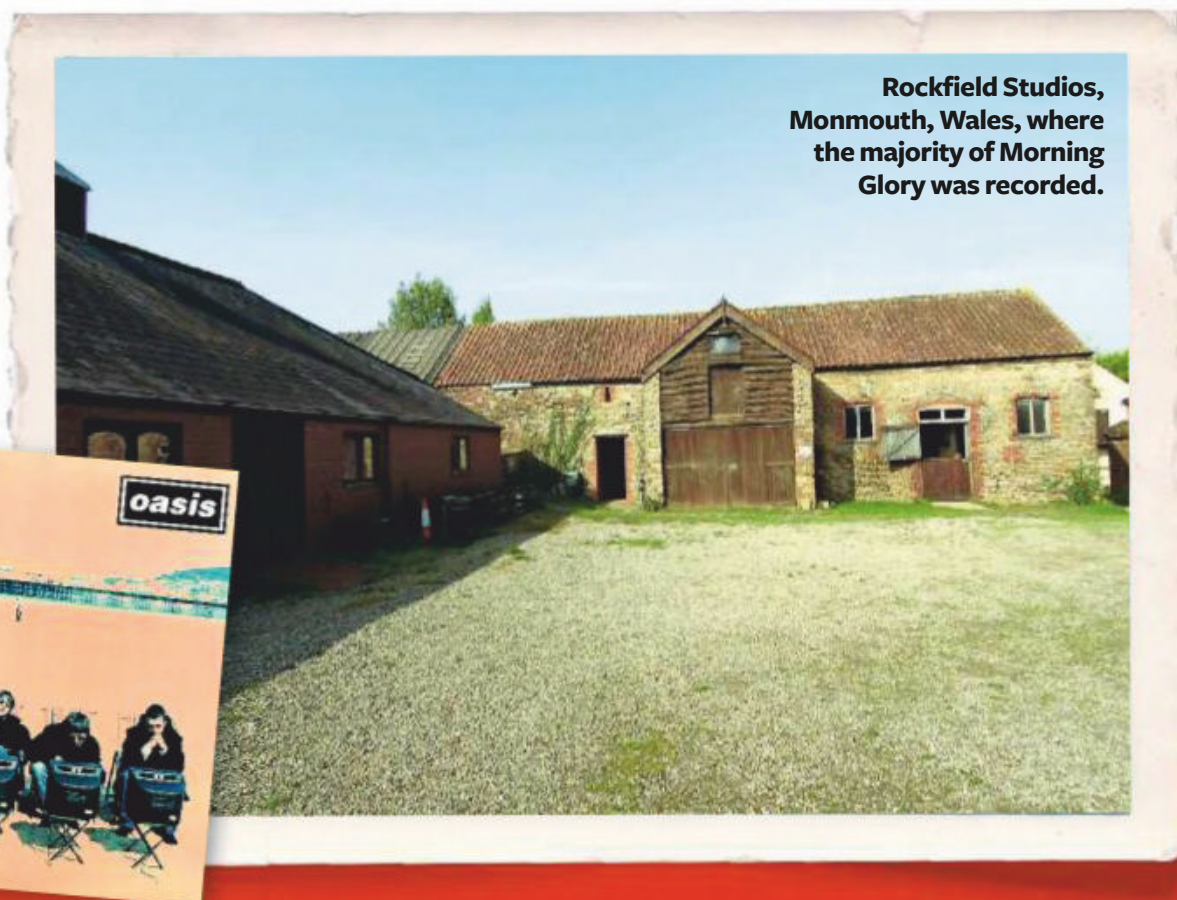
kilter rather than instantly anthemic. But not for long. Shortly it was to ascend to its status as every acoustic guitar-learning pre-teen's first chord sequence, a song that would never, ever be performed without every person in attendance singing every last word. Oasis as a band dropped it from live performances on occasion, while at various points in time, both Liam and Noel Gallagher have both professed their distaste for it, but in 2020 it remains a staple of both their setlists, and the song for which both of them will be forever most associated.

Track 4

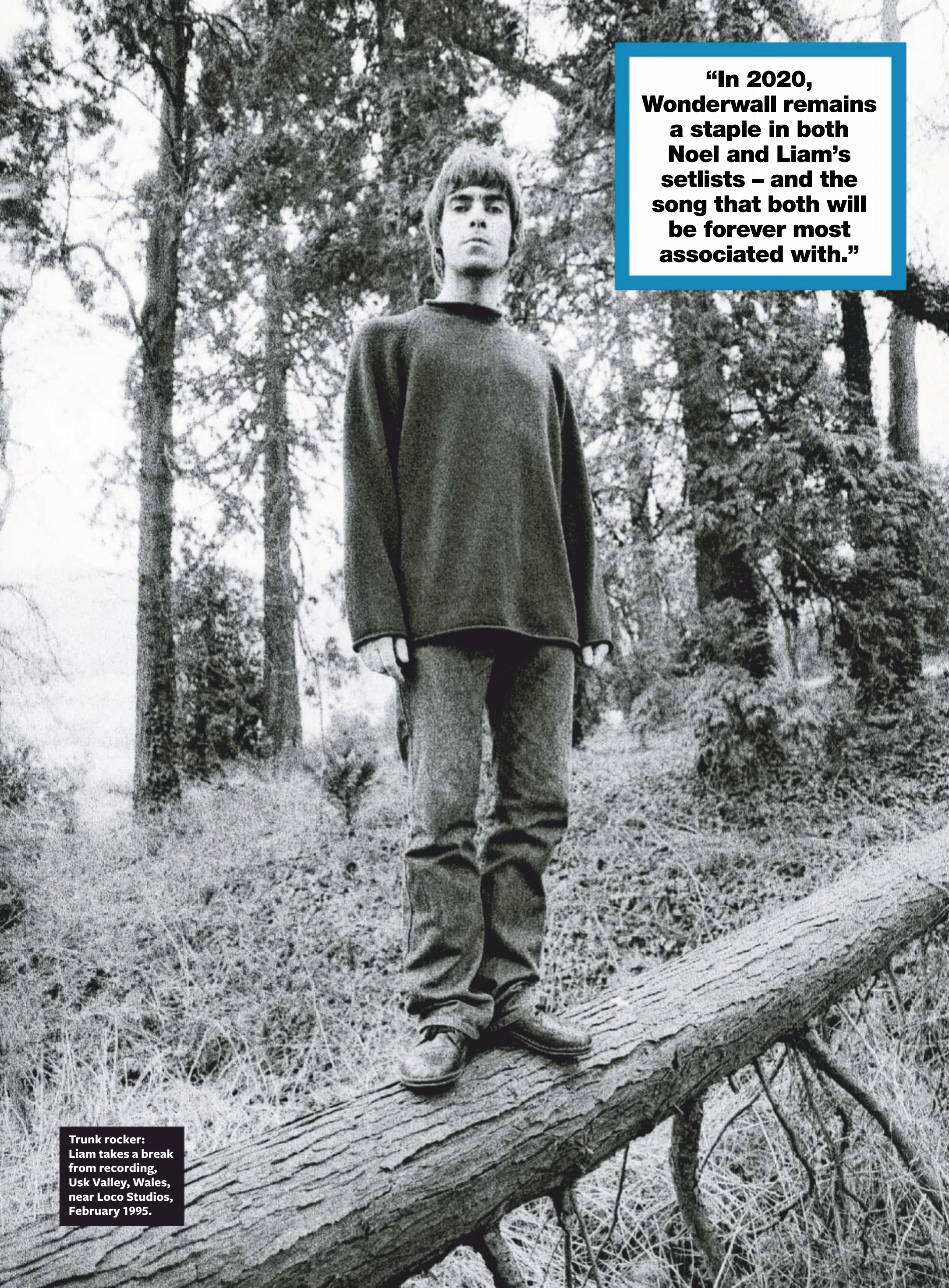
Don't Look Back In Anger

The choice that Noel Gallagher gave Liam Gallagher – “You can have either Wonderwall or Don't Look Back In Anger, and I'm singing the other” – was a tough one.

Given the latter's aforementioned initial objections to Wonderwall, and the extremely overt Lennon-isms on display here, you might have thought his choice would be obvious. Only the two of them really know how the ensuing negotiations went down, but there can be little question, retrospectively, that the final decision was the right one. Wonderwall needed Liam's sneer, with Don't Look Back In Anger far more suited to his brother's higher register. Written in Paris in April of 1995 and debuted, solo acoustic, just a few days later at Oasis's first ever arena show in Sheffield – “I got to the soundcheck, wrote the words >>



Rockfield Studios, Monmouth, Wales, where the majority of Morning Glory was recorded.

A black and white photograph of Liam Gallagher standing on a large, fallen log in a forest. He is wearing a dark, long-sleeved tunic and dark trousers. He has his signature bowl-cut hairstyle and is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is filled with trees and foliage, creating a natural, wooded setting.

“In 2020, Wonderwall remains a staple in both Noel and Liam’s setlists – and the song that both will be forever most associated with.”

**Trunk rocker:
Liam takes a break
from recording,
Usk Valley, Wales,
near Loco Studios,
February 1995.**

out in the dressing room and we actually fucking played it that night” – the final version represented the first time he was backed by a full, electric band. It was performed this way at Glastonbury that year, but that would be the last time that Noel Gallagher would get to sing the chorus of his most famous song unaccompanied. Soon after, the chorus – and, often verses – of Don’t Look Back In Anger belonged to the audience in front of him. And so it continues. In interviews at the time, Noel would often declare that the lyrics meant nothing. But a couple of decades or so later, with the entirety of his home city bellowing the line, “You ain’t ever gonna burn my heart out” in the aftermath of a terrorist attack, they very much did, and do, mean something.

Track 5

Hey Now!

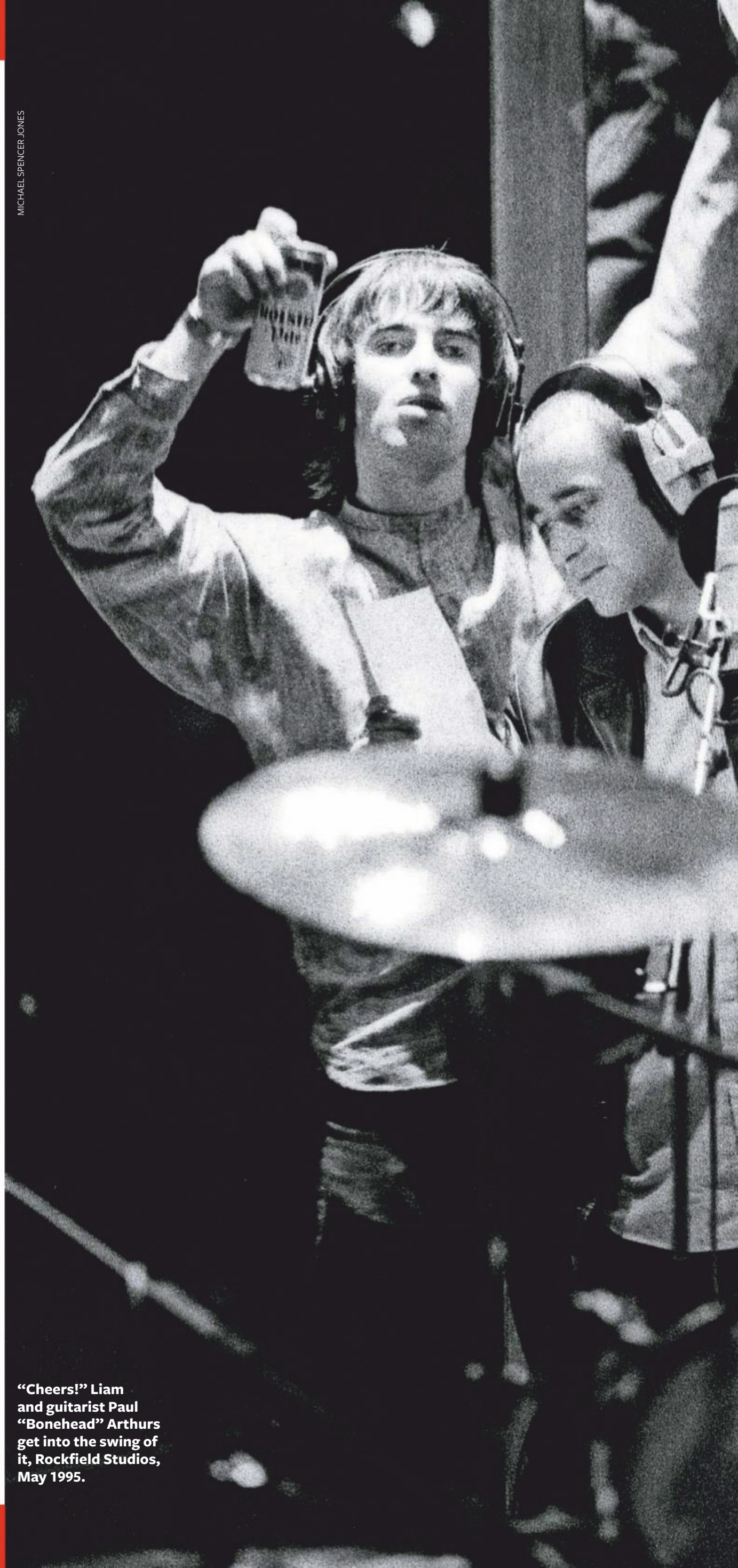
Aside from perhaps a few times at soundchecks, the fifth song on the album was never played live. It is (What’s The Story) Morning Glory)?’s black sheep: perhaps the only song here that a fan would struggle to recall every last word of. Sub-editors might note that its title represents the point at which Noel Gallagher’s love of a superfluous exclamation mark began – see afterwards: It’s Getting Better (Man!!), Gas Panic! and, much later, AKA... What A Life! – but other than that it is not often celebrated. A shame, because it features some of Noel’s most beautifully entwining guitar lines, a great arrangement, an incendiary Liam performance and, in the shape of, “It said you might never know that I want you to know what’s written inside of your head”, perhaps the most gloriously nonsensical Oasis lyric ever.

Track 6

The Swamp Song

With their barrage of barre chords and straightforward rhythm tracks, Oasis never seemed like a band predisposed to instrumentals. So it was a surprise to all those at their Glastonbury headline set in June 1995 when, with a new drummer in tow, they started with a new song without any singing. But if it baffled people at the time, Alan White’s drumming from that performance was good enough to form the basis of the recorded version and The Swamp Song became Oasis’s opener at all of their biggest shows: usurped eventually by the far superior Fuckin’ In The Bushes.

MICHAEL SPENCER JONES



“Cheers!” Liam and guitarist Paul “Bonehead” Arthurs get into the swing of it, Rockfield Studios, May 1995.

“Some Might Say is the only song with the same sentiment, the same towering, kiss-the-sky optimism that ran through Definitely Maybe.”

Track 7

Some Might Say



Oasis's first Number 1 single is the song that links the first and second incarnation of the band in more ways than one. It's the only song on (What's The Story) Morning Glory? to feature original drummer Tony McCarroll. It's the first song that Noel wrote having moved down to London from Manchester. But is also the only song with the same sentiment, the same towering, kiss-the-sky optimism that ran through Definitely Maybe, the “we will find a brighter day” refrain the last sign of the kids trying to reach for the stars, now on the way to becoming those stars. The only demo that Noel made for the album, his version being recorded at Loco Studios in Wales on The Verve's equipment (who at the time were having a weekend off from recording their second LP, A Northern Soul, with ...Morning Glory producer Owen Morris). This version, with Noel on vocals, was slightly slower, and was deemed complete enough to be played, once, on Steve Lamacq's Radio One show. But the final version is something else: one of Liam Gallagher's finest vocals, swamped in echo and sounding more confident than ever. When the younger Gallagher began reviving Oasis songs in his solo sets, Some Might Say – passed over by Oasis from 2002 onwards – was one of the best, most triumphantly received moments. And rightly so.

Track 8

Cast No Shadow

The band on whose equipment the Some Might Say demo was recorded were early-days touring partners of Oasis – the infamous Amsterdam non-show, prior to which the whole band minus Noel were arrested and then deported, was to have been in support of The Verve. But as ...Morning Glory arrived, The Verve were in tatters: splitting as History, the third, string-laden single from that second album was released (“All farewells should be sudden” declared its sleeve). For the time being, they would have to make do with this song being “dedicated to the genius of Richard Ashcroft”. It was to be a cap-doff that helped them no end when they eventually re-formed, proffering the more accessible songs – mostly written solely by Ashcroft – that populated the multi-million selling Urban Hymns in 1997. By that time, there was a huge mainstream audience hungry for the more melancholic, confessional, acoustic guitars-and-strings side of Oasis that Cast No Shadow exhibited. And if it would be extremely unfair to accuse The Verve of copying this sound – if anything, History was an influence on the writing and arrangement of Cast No Shadow. By the end of 1997, others certainly were. There's a clear lineage stretching from Coldplay and Keane through Damien Rice and all the way up to Ed Sheeran and Lewis Capaldi. It's likely that neither band are especially proud of such an association but, given that it has now stretched over a quarter of a century, it's an impressive legacy nonetheless.

Track 9

She's Electric

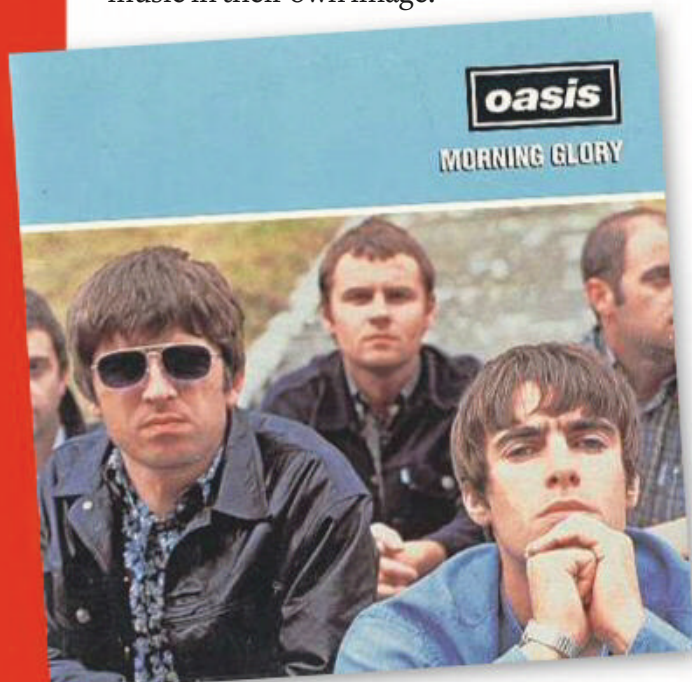
With the rock'n'roll fantasising of Step Out – “I met her down a disco in a beat-up car, she was purring down the road” – jettisoned for copyright reasons, it fell to ...Morning Glory's very own Diggy's Dinner to provide the levity on an otherwise very intense second half. Based on a jaunty, sped-up version of the chord sequence from Definitely Maybe's Married With Children, and with the silliest, most kitchen-sink lyrics that Noel Gallagher ever has written or probably ever will write, She's Electric is something of an anomaly in the Oasis back catalogue: at odds with the themes and the swagger that define them. Yet though it was never played live during >>

the '90s, the fact that it was revived in the next millennium – and sung by Noel rather than Liam – shows that its writer saw and still sees the funny side of his band's funniest ever song.

Track 10

Morning Glory

On Some Might Say B-side Talk Tonight, Noel had posited that “your dreams are made of strawberry lemonade”. Barely six months on, they “are made when you’re chained to the mirror and the razor blade”: an even more explicit reference to cocaine than Cigarettes & Alcohol’s “you might as well do the white line” (“I’m amazed we got away with either,” said Noel, much later). If Be Here Now was the sound of gone-way-too-far-now, the title track of its predecessor is teetering, perfectly, on the edge: titanic drums, Apocalypse Now helicopters, screeching multi-layered guitars... the musical equivalent of the moment when you should go home but don’t. Diehard R.E.M. fans will no doubt theorise that the two-chord riff driving here is a straight steal from The One I Love. Certainly the latter song would have been all over the radio at the time Noel Gallagher was writing it, and there is more than a passing resemblance – if not quite enough to jolt the lawyers into action. But however Oasis arrived at one of their most titanic songs, it was soon being re-appropriated left, right and centre by the bands following in their wake: to name but three, the likes of Supergrass’ Richard III, Cast’s Free Me and Shed Seven’s Getting Better were all built on extremely similar, loud guitar foundations. All of these songs made the Top 20, too, evidence of just how much, at this point in time, Oasis had reshaped British pop music in their own image.

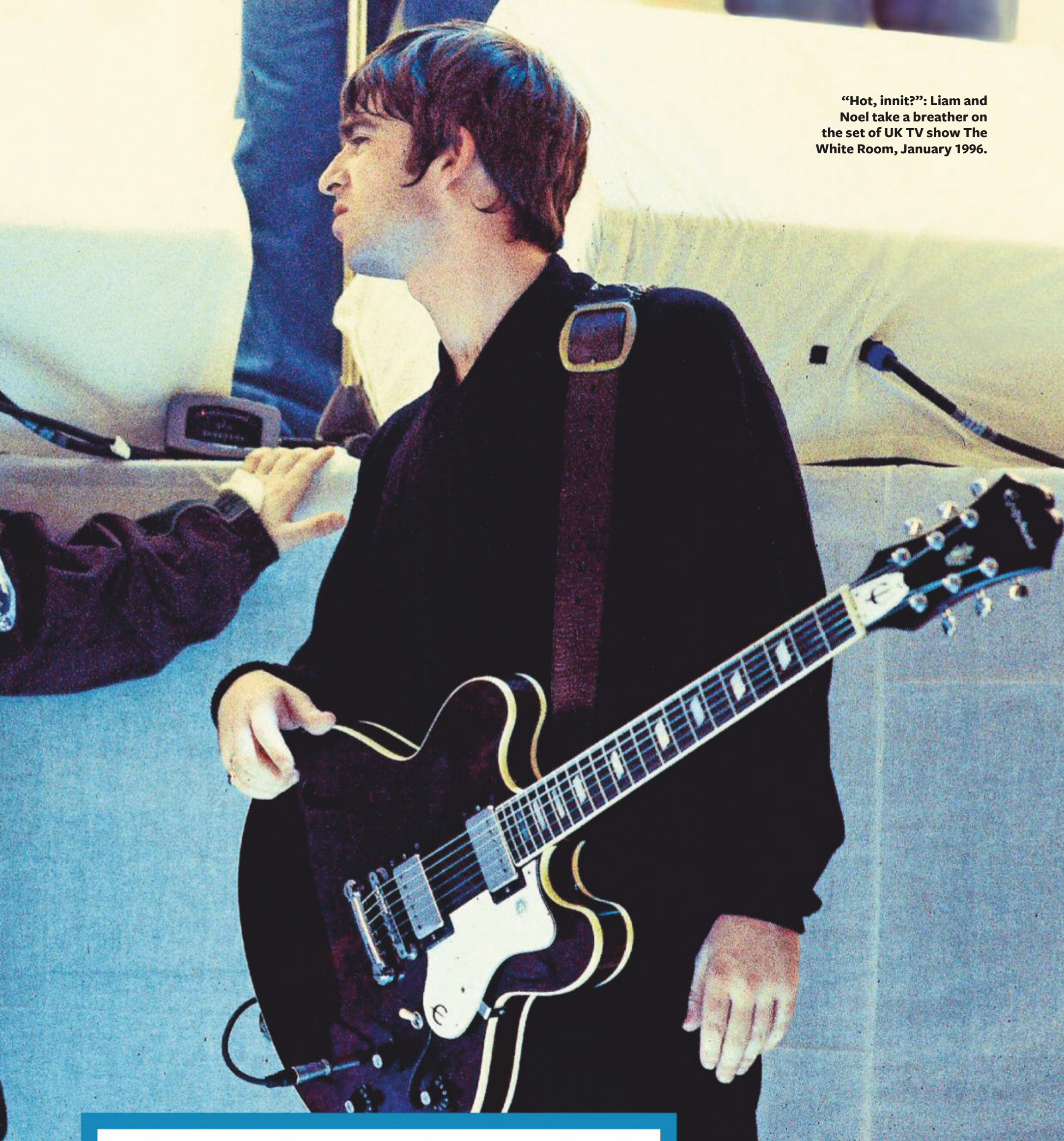


Track 11

Champagne Supernova

Perhaps the most spine-tingling bit of 2016’s Supersonic documentary is the moment when, through the lens of a camcorder behind the mixing desk

of Rockfield, through the glass of the vocal booth, we see Liam Gallagher. In his left hand is a lyric sheet, guiding him as he sings the first and only take of the greatest Oasis epic. It’s indicative of just how casually effortless he – and they – were at this point. How, in contrast to the arduous Definitely Maybe recording process, these multiple-generation-touching anthems just materialised so swiftly. And of the almost telepathic nature of his and Noel’s



“Hot, innit?”: Liam and Noel take a breather on the set of UK TV show *The White Room*, January 1996.

“Champagne Supernova turned out to be as excessive as its title suggested. But this was the perfect level of excess, the song that best defines their imperial phase.”

DES WILLIE/GETTY

relationship at this point. As producer Owen Morris noted, “Noel would sing it through for Liam, once, then Liam would sing it, once.” Oasis’s first foray over the seven-

minute mark, laden with all kinds of guitar lines (some of them Paul Weller’s), *Champagne Supernova* turned out as excessive as its title suggested. But this was

the perfect level of excess, and the song that best defines their imperial phase, more so even than *Wonderwall* or *Don’t Look Back In Anger*. No other band would sing a line such as, “Where were you while we were getting high?”, words that resonate now with the aforementioned people who were not even born when they were written, as much as they did to the hundreds of thousands who got the chance to bellow them, eyes closed and arms aloft, at Oasis. **Q**

Two Sides Of The Same Coin

The B-side to a single was once a noble art in itself, a place where artists could stretch out, experiment and sometimes stash gold. Few acts could match the run that Oasis delivered around (What's The Story) Morning Glory?, though.

Hamish MacBain tells the tale of each.



he '90s were not short on bands going above and beyond when it came to their B-sides. Suede, The Verve, Pulp... all excelled in this area. The young Noel Gallagher's heroes, too – The Beatles, The Jam, The Smiths, The Stone Roses – did some of their best work on the flip sides of their singles (see, respectively: Rain, The Butterfly Collector, Girl Afraid, Mersey Paradise). But even against such stiff contemporary and historical competition, when it comes to B-sides, no band comes close to the over-achiever status of Oasis in 1995. The theory has often been posited that had Noel Gallagher banked some of these

songs rather than frittering them away, he could have extended Oasis's imperial period significantly. But where, really, would the fun have been in that?

Talk Tonight

Few Oasis songs are inspired by specific events but, famously, Noel Gallagher's greatest solo acoustic recording definitely was. Following on from his band's notoriously disastrous 1994 show at the Whiskey A Go-Go in Los Angeles, he took his passport and the tour float and disappeared: holing up in San Francisco at the house of a woman – years later revealed to be one Melissa Lim – whom he had met three days previously after a (slightly) less chaotic show

in her home city. The song – complete with reference to Lim's favourite flavour of Snapple lemonade, strawberry – was recorded the next month in Austin, Texas, and immediately became a bone of contention between the Gallaghers: Liam, unenthused by the idea of Noel's melancholic, off-the-grid adventure being immortalised on an Oasis release. Talk Tonight was mooted as a B-side to Whatever in December 1994 but didn't ultimately appear; the sole chance for the public to hear it was when Noel performed it at a BBC session that Christmas. Such a great song could clearly not sit in the vaults forever, however, and when it did arrive with Some Might Say it quickly became a firm favourite and, in 2006, one of only three B-sides to make Oasis's first, and to date only, Best Of compilation, Stop The Clocks.

Acquiesce

The title – it can be interpreted as “come together”, a title that might have been a step too far – came from an interviewer, who was describing to Noel Gallagher, as part of an analogy for the stratospheric rise of his band, how all the kids that followed the Pied Piper were “experiencing acquiesce”. Few songs in the Oasis catalogue fulfilled this purpose as well. Perhaps the peak of relegating absurdly strong, should-be-a-single tracks to B-sides, Acquiesce had to settle for being the opener at many of Oasis's mid-'90s enormo-shows, a staple of every live set until they split up and the song that,

Buried treasure: some might say that the B-sides were often as good as the A-sides.

however much its writer might periodically say otherwise, most overtly encapsulates the yin-yang, cat-dog chemistry of the Gallagher brothers. Written when Noel's train to Loco Studios in Wales stopped for the best part of an hour because of something on the tracks – “sat in the smoking section. About five other people on the train” – it's still being played live by Liam to this day, his audiences now officially tasked with stepping in for the chorus.

Headshrinker

Aside from Bring It On Down from Definitely Maybe, this Some Might Say B-side – the intro a straight rip from the Faces' Stay With Me – is as punky as Oasis ever got, a tornado of descending power chords and abrasive guitar solos or, as Noel put it, “like the Stones meets the Pistols on speed”. For a lot of Oasis diehards, this is



also Liam Gallagher's greatest ever vocal: the perfect balance of Lydon sneer and Lennon melodicism, on which you can hear him pushing himself to a point, on the second verse, where he almost cracks but doesn't. The lyrics, too, are brilliant: nasty, menacing and full of venomous contempt for whoever it is about.

It's Better People

Of all the largely acoustic, Noel-sung songs that populated early Oasis B-sides, It's Better People is by far the least well-remembered: never performed live, not included on any compilations, hugely overshadowed by Rockin' Chair on the Roll With It single release and not really spoken of much soon after it came into existence. As a song, it is far better than just alright – a propulsive, folksy arrangement, a nice two-part psychedelic vocal on the chorus – but the ludicrously high standard that its writer had set at this particular point in time was such that suffering by comparison was an inevitability. In short, it is the only early Oasis B-side that sounds like a B-side.

Rockin' Chair

Often, the Noel Gallagher songs that pre-date his joining Oasis are characterised by lyrics that, rather than being I-want-it-all celebratory, are yearning for a better life that will never come. An opening line such as, "I'm older than I wish to be" would have felt out of place on Definitely Maybe, but B-sides were the perfect safe space in which to reveal this side of his writing. Right back as far as debut single Supersonic, there had been Take Me Away ("Take me away... cos I'm sat here on my own") and Rockin' Chair – elevated by an intricate, largely acoustic, Johnny Marr-esque arrangement and some truly sublime Liam singing – continued this tradition. Before Wonderwall materialised, it was set to be included on (What's The Story) Morning Glory?. There's no way it would have connected on the scale that the most famous Oasis song did, but it's about the best example of melancholy Oasis there is: and certainly a better song than Roll With It.



In the frame: Wonderwall was backed by, among others, the classic The Masterplan.

Round Are Way

The brass-laden stomp that came on the flipside of Wonderwall was held in high enough regard to be a centrepiece of all the biggest Oasis shows – Earl's Court, Maine Road, Knebworth – and to be performed twice on TV instead of better-known album tracks or singles. Strange, then, that Round Are Way was ultimately omitted from B-sides compilation The Masterplan: meaning that it kind of fell through the cracks for future generations, a strange little gem for only the most obsessive of new fans to discover. This is a great shame, as it's a pretty unique Oasis song: like the Blues Brothers' Everybody Needs Somebody To Love slowed down to their patented just-too-slow pace, with a lyric that features a game of 25-a-side football and rhymes "singing" with "minging".

The Masterplan

The formatting of singles in the '90s was such that with a cassette or 7-inch release you would get one extra track, on a 12-inch two. Only on a CD would you get the full three. In 1995, most people were probably buying their singles on CD, but even so: if throwing away The Masterplan as a B-side at all seems like self-sabotage, billing it below Round Are Way and The Swamp Song is a straight-up act of total lunacy. But no song is more indicative of the gloriously spontaneous way in which Oasis were operating in 1995 – songs were just put out as they arrived – and the sheer purpleness of the patch that Noel Gallagher was in at this point.

Written in a hotel room while on tour in Japan, The Masterplan has the lushest orchestral arrangement of any Oasis song, some of the best nonsense/not-nonsense lyrics Noel Gallagher ever wrote and sounds effortlessly anthemic in the way that All Around The World from Be Here Now does not. Not only could it have been an Oasis single. It could've been *the* Oasis single.

Step Out

Noel Gallagher shares with Marc Bolan an inability to drive and a resulting fascination with fast cars: Jaguars being a particular favourite. Jaguars feature heavily in this song full of all kinds of '70s high school film-style imagery – "She was dressed up in leopardskin"; "Down a disco in a beat up car" – that should have slotted in to the second side of (What's The Story) Morning Glory? but was pulled because of its proximity to Stevie Wonder's Uptight (see p55). But it remains a great, fast song: great (and fast) enough for Noel to revive for Oasis's first stadium tour of the '00s.

Underneath The Sky

Another great example of how easy Oasis were making it seem in 1995 and 1996, this not-often mentioned song has the kind of effortlessly classy-yet-catchy melody their contemporaries would have killed for, lyrics pulled largely from a book Noel picked up in the airport and a one-finger piano solo that took both Noel and Bonehead to play. They were both pissed, obviously.

Cum On Feel The Noize


No Oasis cover version could ever eclipse I Am The Walrus: their steamroller take on one of the Beatles' most intricately layered psychedelic arrangements a perennial set closer and a perfect encapsulation of their musical mission statement ("the Sex Pistols playing Beatles songs" as one early reviewer so accurately put it). Even in 1995, Slade were a far less fashionable influence to exhibit, but they were a clear influence on Oasis nonetheless and this cover – guitars seemingly louder than they had ever been before, Gallaghers singing in unison – is a fitting doff of the cap. It was played as part of an all-covers encore at Maine Road, performed on Jools Holland with Noel singing (Liam was off sick) and, when it was played on TOTP after Don't Look Back In Anger, it made Oasis one of only two bands ever invited to do two songs on the show as part of the same performance. The other? They start with an "S" and end with an "e"...



"Not only could The Masterplan have been an Oasis single. It could've been *the* Oasis single."

The Year After (What's The Story) Morning Glory?

When (What's The Story) Morning Glory? was released, Oasis were on Blur's shoulder, pushing them hard on the final bend of their sprint. By the time it had been out for a year, Oasis were in a different race altogether, up against the international stadium-fillers. Hamish MacBain charts that year.



“Being part of Oasis was like being part of a circus: you just turn up and everyone goes nuts.” **Liam Gallagher**



Two aces, no bassist

With (What's The Story) Morning Glory? released, Oasis gear up for their biggest gigs to date: two nights in front of 20,000 people at Earl's Court, with the Bootleg Beatles in support, which both sold out in seconds. But there is a problem. Or rather, two problems. The first is that bass player Paul “Guigsy” McGuigan had just a month

or so previously quit the band due to “nervous exhaustion”. The second is that his replacement, Scott McLeod of The Ya Yas, has *also* left the band after just a few shows. And then the phone rings. **Bonehead (rhythm guitar):** “Guigsy phoned up and was like, ‘I’ll be there’. It was great to see your mate back onstage and we gave it all that night, you can hear it in the performance. You just have to look at the crowd to see how good it was.”

Noel Gallagher (lead guitar/vocals): “Earl’s Court was when the proper famous people started showing up. You’d look across and be like, ‘George Michael!’”

Liam Gallagher (vocals): “I didn’t feel scared one bit, man: all those people were there to see you and give you massive amounts of fucking love. Being part of Oasis was like being part of a circus: you just turn up and everyone goes nuts.” >>



Gonna-bes get busy

There are three wins – Best Group, Best Album and Best Video – but that is not what everyone remembers about Oasis’s second visit to the Brit Awards (also at Earl’s Court). There is Noel telling Michael Hutchence that “has-beens shouldn’t be presenting awards to gonna-bes”; there is the band refusing to leave the podium and proclaiming that “anyone who thinks they’re hard enough to take us off the stage can come up here now!”, then pointing out Blur and singing “Shitlife...” to the tune of Parklife; and most memorably there is Noel eulogising the then-Labour leader Tony Blair, to whose new address he will next year pay a visit.

Noel: “When Tony Blair spoke, his words seemed to speak to people, young people. Call me naive but I felt something – I’m not sure what it was, but I felt it all the same.”

Alan McGee (Creation Records boss): “Everyone was out of control...”

Noel: “We were off our heads that night. We were talking some right bullshit.”

Liam: “Fucking hell, that jacket. Jesus Christ... I didn’t take that off either. Yeah, that was hot. We were running the show back then and it was top. It was perfect. Blur had won loads and I kept going on at them and [*guitarist, Graham*] Coxon was getting a bit uptight. It was one of them – I was like, ‘I am fucking winding you up.’ That kind of thing. Fuck knows what’s gone down since then, man. Ever since Oasis split up – and I’m not being big-headed here – everyone’s just run amok. It just seems to me that all the posh idiots, or whoever they are or whatever, have just got in and fucking sealed it off.”



Citizen caning

Demand for Oasis tickets is now simply too big to be limited to venues with roofs: their first outdoor shows take place at the home of their beloved Manchester City FC. Both nights sold out instantly in February, having been announced only through local radio and press. Manic Street Preachers support, Noel plays a Union Jack guitar, Liam wears an Umbro tracksuit, they open with two B-sides that go down like most band’s singles, close with their covers of I Am The Walrus and Cum On Feel The Noize, and ascend into superstardom.

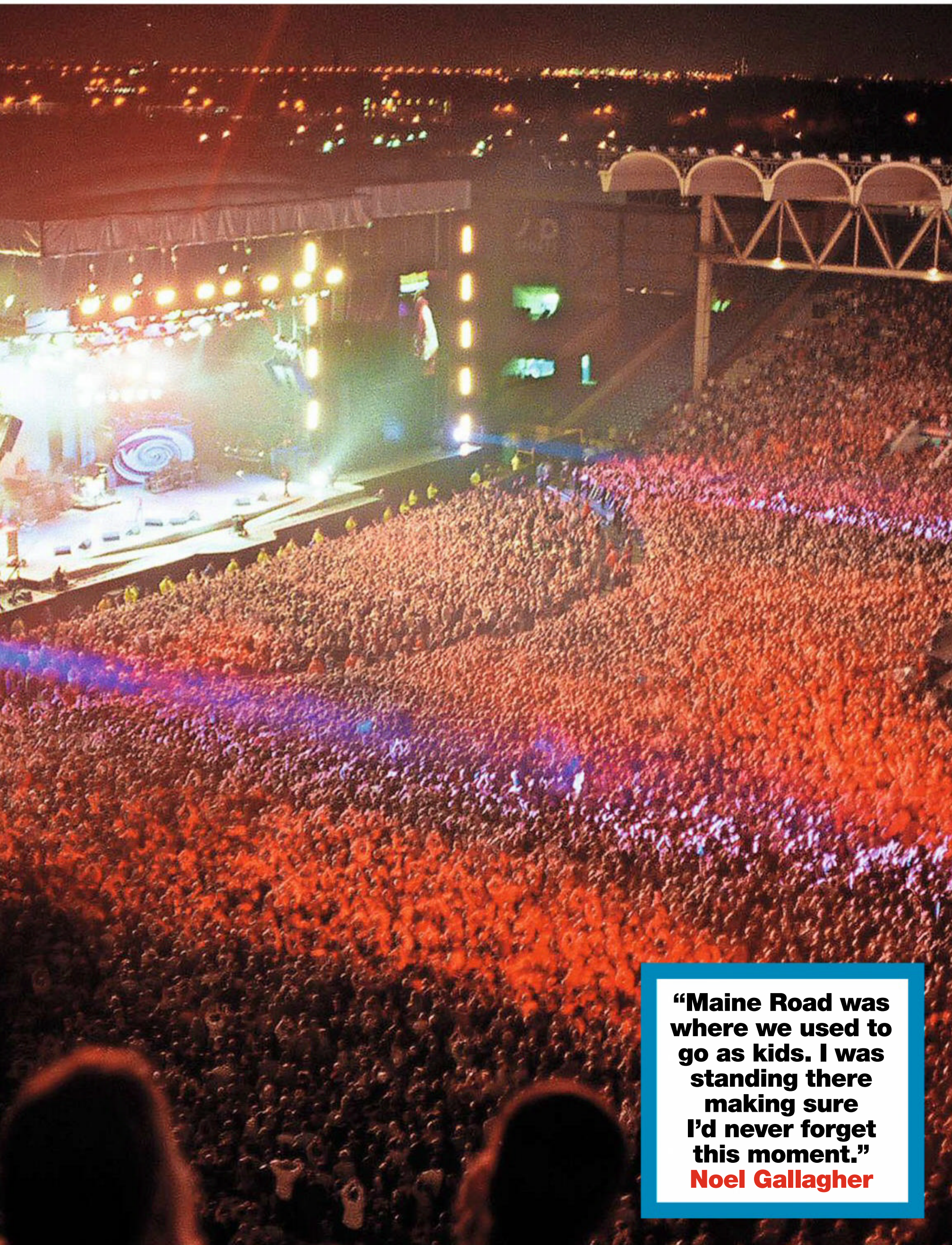
Liam: “I went backstage, there was some player’s fucking Umbro gear just sitting there and I thought, ‘I’m having a bit of that’, tried it on, fucking freebie innit and I fucking pinched it and fucking wore it.”

Noel: “It looked like a big front room except there were 42,000 people in it. Maine Road was where we all used to go as kids. So I was standing there trying to make sure I would never forget this moment.”

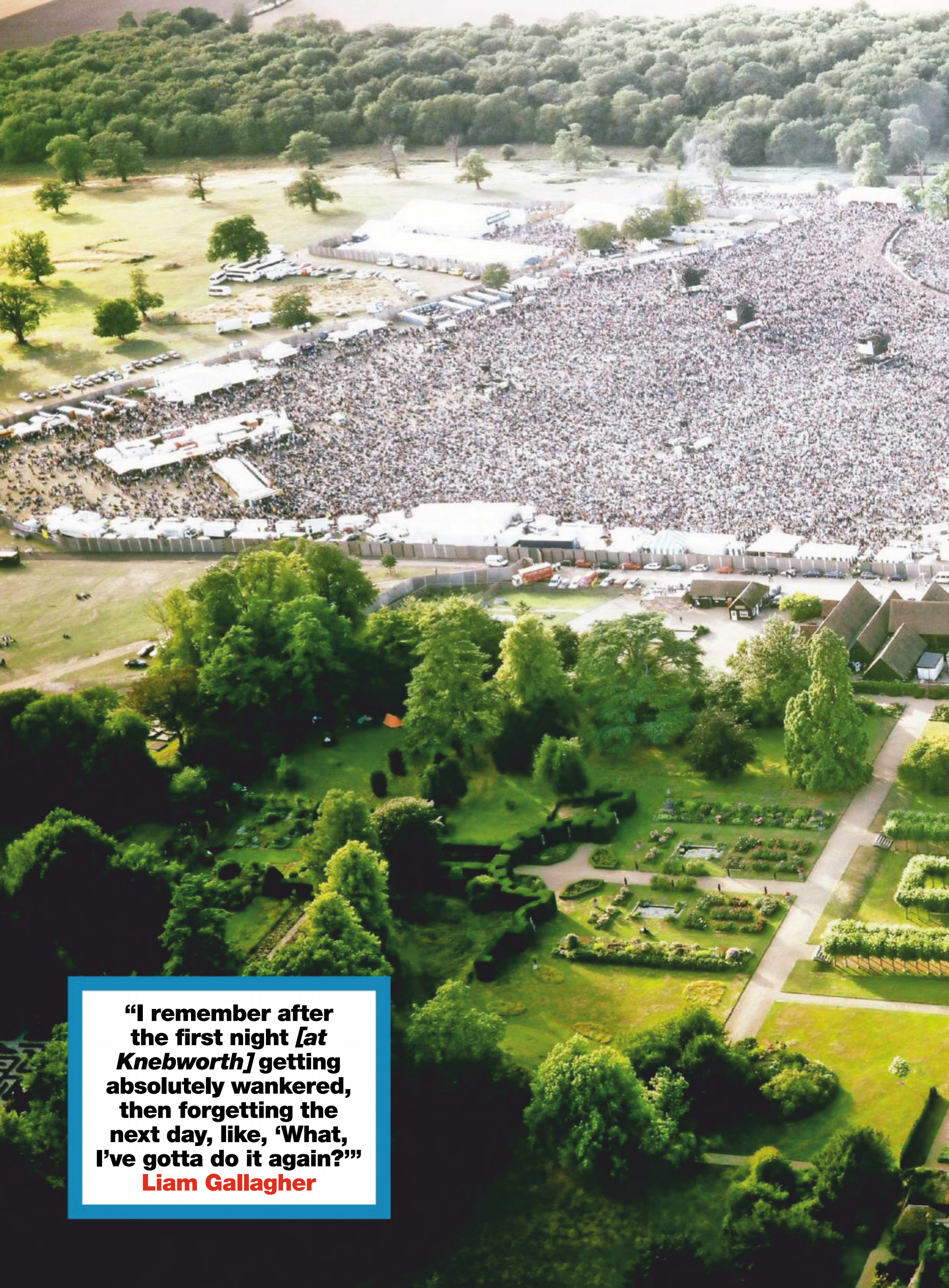
Liam: “I moved to London the day after that, or the second night. The first night I stayed at my mam’s, the second night I might have stayed in a hotel. And then, the next day I fucking went down to London and then that was it, I stayed down.”



ALAN DAVIDSON/SHUTTERSTOCK, DAVE HOGAN/GETTY

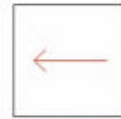


“Maine Road was where we used to go as kids. I was standing there making sure I’d never forget this moment.”
Noel Gallagher



**“I remember after
the first night [*at
Knebworth*] getting
absolutely wankered,
then forgetting the
next day, like, ‘What,
I’ve gotta do it again?’”**

Liam Gallagher



History trip

The statistics now are simply mind boggling: 2.7 million people apply for tickets (about one in 20 of the British population) for Knebworth. Oasis could easily play a week of shows if they wanted, but two will do (on 10 and 11 August) with 125,000 turning up each day, making them the biggest concerts ever staged in the UK. Noel's guitar rig will be "officially louder than a rocket". The backstage area alone, complete with giant Scalextric track and filled with a rumoured 7000 people, will be bigger than some of the smaller British festivals. The Prodigy, Manic Street Preachers, Ocean Colour Scene, The Charlatans and the Bootleg Beatles all support, before Oasis arrive by helicopter and make history.

Noel: "Genuinely, now, I can't remember walking onstage at Knebworth."

Liam: "I don't think I even looked at any of the support bands, I just stayed backstage fucking about. We were all in these caravans. I remember The Prodigy being on and it was just shaking, and I remember sticking my head out the door going, 'Who the fuck has put these lot on?' And I'd heard [*guest guitarist, The Stone Roses*] John Squire had this really cool Winnebago, so I was trying to find that. Someone had said it was covered in velvet, like a Jimi Hendrix vibe. I was like, 'So why I am in this fucking white thing, then?'"

Bonehead: "John Squire came onstage and joined us [*for Champagne Supernova and I Am The Walrus*]. The whole lot of us were so – even though we knew him and it was John Squire our friend – it was still a special moment. I looked to my left and it was, 'OH MY GOD. I'm onstage with John Squire,' you know? Friendships aside, there's still that secret fan inside."

Liam: "I swear to God, I cannot remember much about it. What was I doing the night before? Being fucking brilliant, probably. I was with Patsy [*Kensit*] at the time, so I was probably in London. I remember after the first night getting absolutely fucking wanked, and then forgetting the next day: like, 'What, I've gotta do it again?' I'd only brought enough clothes for the one night. I wore the white jacket on the first night, but the big jumper on the second night is fucking Patsy's. I was going, 'I can't wear the white jacket again!' and she had this big jumper on. I went, 'Give us that here', blow-dried me fucking hair, got on with it."

Noel: "I remember sitting there, in the backstage area, and someone saying, 'Well, what now?' And I was like, 'I couldn't fucking tell you.' And that was how I felt for a good couple of years afterwards. It's like, 'What do you do when you've done everything.' I suppose it's like getting a massive pay rise and buying everything you want. What do you do after that?"



**“We needed a break.
We needed to sit in
the garden with
those polystyrene
gnomes.”**

Liam Gallagher



Losing it in America

First up, it is Liam who bails on Oasis's first major US arena tour (with Screaming Trees and Manic Street Preachers), refusing to get on the plane and declaring that he has to buy a house. Noel takes over on vocals. Liam returns after four gigs and in time for the MTV Awards on 4 September, 1996, at which the American media are shocked by his spitting Red Stripe over the stage. The tour continues. A fight between band members over not very much at all ensues. Then Noel decides that he's had enough, quits the band and flies home. It looks like Oasis is all over.

Noel: “When I'd landed [*back in the UK*], I phoned Marcus [*Russell, Oasis manager*] on his mobile. He was outside waiting. I asked him, ‘Is there any press?’ He went, ‘Is there

any fucking press here? Wait till those doors open.’ The doors opened and it was bedlam. I wanted to go back to America.”

Liam: “We needed a break. We needed to sit in the garden with those polystyrene gnomes.”

Noel: “The reason U2 and R.E.M. and Coldplay are the biggest white rock bands in America is because of their frontmen. Not being negative towards Liam; he's just not Chris Martin, he's not Bono, he's not Michael Stipe. He's Liam. For all intents and purposes, Americans don't get Liams. I think we're musically as strong as those three bands put together, but as characters we're different.”



Here we go ...Now

Since debuting new songs My Big Mouth and It's Gettin' Better (Man!!) at Knebworth, anticipation for new Oasis material has been sky-high. But a year on from (What's The Story) Morning Glory?, they are only just beginning the follow-up, with initial sessions booked at London's Abbey Road. Under the intense glare of the media and fans sat outside daily, it immediately feels like an album that is going to be a lot more difficult to make than its predecessor was.

Noel: “It was exciting but exhausting as well. You're the biggest band in the world, making



this much-anticipated new record, it was the birth of celebrity culture and what became known as Britpop had crossed over into the tabloids. I was constantly having a microphone shoved into my face. No way to make a record.”

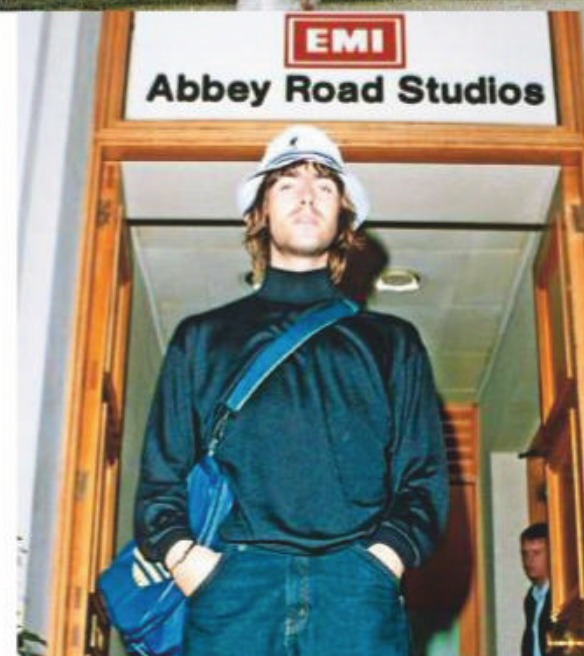
Bonehead: “The paparazzi were breaking into the studio, looking for drugs, looking for a story. I was staying in an apartment with Owen [Morris, producer], which was next door. We were living and sleeping there. But we had to put a disguise on before going to the shops in the morning.”

Liam: “I was living in St John’s Wood, on a road called Hill Road, which is right next to Abbey Road. The studio was right there, and

so for me to go to my corner shop I had to go across the fucking zebra crossing every fucking time to get milk. So obviously, me, I was just fucking milking it, every time. I was like, ‘Fucking yeah!’ Coming across the road was just fucking top.”

Owen Morris: “The only reason anyone was there was the money. Noel had decided Liam was a shit singer. Liam had decided he hated Noel’s songs. Massive amounts of drugs. Big fights. Bad vibes. Shit recordings.”

Alan McGee: “I used to go down to the studio, and there was so much cocaine getting done at that point... Owen was out of control, and he was the one in charge of it. And the music was just fucking loud.”





ED O'BRIEN

Radio One

For many years, **Ed O'Brien** resisted making music apart from his colleagues in Radiohead. He'd sooner have left the band altogether. But then he turned 50. "I wanted to make a record that had hope and love and light," he tells **Dorian Lynskey** between rehearsals with his band in Wales.

Photography: **Alex Lake**



Fir real: Radiohead guitarist Ed O'Brien branches out alone, Plas Dinam Country House, Llandinam, Powys, Wales, 23 January, 2020.

On a chilly

afternoon in January, Plas Dinam Country House looks like the setting of a murder mystery, or a ghost story. It's in the same patch of mid-Wales as Led Zeppelin's fabled Bron-Yr-Aur – Misty Mountain Hop country – and the surrounding hills and valleys are blanked out by a wintry fog.

Ed O'Brien – 51-year-old father of two, one-fifth of Radiohead, currently trading as EOB – bought a house nearby during the seven-year gestation of his debut solo album, *Earth*, because he craved wide open spaces. He dreamt up lyrics while wandering in the hills. So when it was time to start recording in 2017, this remote Victorian mansion was perfect. "It was really important to find a place in this land that would set the tone for the recordings," he says reverentially. "Often you imbue the music with the spirit of the first place that you go to. The first time we did that was *OK Computer*. That house is all over it."

For those album sessions, O'Brien assembled a crack squad of musicians, including bassist Nathan East, drummer Omar Hakim (the rhythm section on Daft Punk's *Random Access Memories*), guitarist Dave Okumu and producer Flood. More than two years later, he has returned to Plas Dinam with a four-strong live band to prepare for EOB's forthcoming tour dates. One of the reception rooms has been turned into an unlikely rehearsal space, where O'Brien's effects pedals are arrayed on a floral carpet in front of an oil painting and New Orleans drummer Alvin Ford Jr summons disco thunder beside a dresser loaded with ornamental plates. A whiteboard setlist propped up in the fireplace jokingly bills the band as EOB & The King Prawns. O'Brien chose EOB because it

"It was really important to find a place that would set the tone for the recordings." O'Brien rehearses in Plas Dinam; (far left) with Radiohead in New York, 1993.

sounds like a larger entity. "I don't like the sound of solo projects. I'd like it to morph into other things."

As they start playing, they feel more like a new band than an arena-rock veteran and his hired hands. The music runs from Arcadian folk to full-tilt, arms-aloft

rave. The track *Brasil* encompasses both, starting in the Cambrian Mountains and ending up on Ipanema beach. Only the righteously pissed off Banksters sounds much like Radiohead. During an ecstatic cover of Ulrich Schnauss's stadium-shoegaze colossus *On My Own*, O'Brien plays with his head back and eyes closed, a serene expression on his face. As the final notes fade away, he opens his eyes and smiles with satisfaction. "Nice!" They try to start another song but one of his pedals has gone rogue, grumbling like a struggling car engine. "That's the dinner bell," he jokes. "Time for supper."

A film director might have cast O'Brien – lanky, handsome, agreeably posh – as the most well-liked officer in the trenches. He has always been Radiohead's most accessible member: the one keeping a candid online diary during the making of *Kid A* in order to demystify the process; the one you're likely to bump into in one of Glastonbury's afterhours fields. When, in passing, I state the simple fact that Radiohead are one of the most revered bands in the world, he looks embarrassed. "It's weird but it's only in the last year that I've realised, 'Oh, Radiohead!' I've never thought we're a great band. I've thought it's just what we do."

It is 35 years since O'Brien formed a band with four friends at Abingdon School, Oxford, and he feels like he's starting again.





“It’s only in the last year that I’ve realised, ‘Oh, Radiohead!’ I’ve never thought we’re a great band. I’ve thought it’s just what we do.”

For a very long time he had no interest in making his own music. “The last thing anybody needs is a shit album from somebody from Radiohead,” he reasons. “I didn’t feel pressured just because Thom, Philip and Jonny were doing it. In fact I’d go the other way: ‘I’m not fucking doing that.’” But a lot has changed for O’Brien over the last few years and he is giddily enthusiastic about explaining how he got here.

“I think when you turn 50 something happens,” he says. “You pass through a gate. I don’t feel 50 – I feel better than I did when I was 25 – but I’m this number and crikey, there’s so much stuff I want to do.”

Ed O’Brien didn’t want to quit Radiohead but he thought he should. It was 2007, just after they’d finished making *In Rainbows*, and the prospect of leaving his two small children to go on tour filled him with guilt. A Manchester United fan, he admired the way Eric Cantona had walked away from football at the height of his powers to become an actor. He thought maybe he could retrain as an acupuncturist and spend more time at home. >>

Before taking such a drastic decision, O'Brien sought the counsel of two of his wisest musician friends, Johnny Marr and Neil Finn. "Neil was hilarious," O'Brien remembers, laughing. "He said, 'Ed, listen, your kids are not going to thank you when they're teenagers for leaving Radiohead for them.' And I said, 'Good point, Neil.'"

What he did instead was tell his bandmates that in five years, come what may, he was moving to Brazil with his family, which is exactly what he did. It was while living in rural Brazil for a few months in 2012 that he finally got the songwriting bug. "It was like being pulled in: 'I have to do this.'" At first he dabbled in dark, dubstep-influenced electronica but that was no fun. Simultaneously going to Rio carnival and rediscovering Primal Scream's *Movin' On Up* convinced him to go in the opposite direction: "coming out of the darkness into the light."

When he moved back to Britain in 2013 he recorded some demos with producer Ian Davenport and instinctively played them to the rest of Radiohead. "That was my knee-jerk reaction: 'What do the guys think?' I don't know why I did that, actually. Neither Thom, Jonny nor Philip do that with their stuff. I realised I had to stand on my own two feet."

He found the answer at the school gates, where his wife had befriended the wife of Mark "Flood" Ellis, who just happened to be his favourite producer, from U2, Depeche Mode and PJ Harvey through to Foals' Holy Fire. Once

they had become friends, he tentatively mentioned his demos. "I said, 'I've got these songs, I really like them, I need some good counsel,' and after four songs he said, 'Do you want me to work on them?'"

After downing tools for three years while Radiohead recorded and toured *A Moon Shaped Pool*, O'Brien resumed work at Plas Dinam in the autumn of 2017, followed by long, arduous months in London. Despite being an old hand in many respects, he had to learn how to be both a bandleader (the album's guests include Laura Marling and Portishead's Adrian Utley) and a frontman. "Until you do the singing thing you don't fully realise that there's nowhere to hide," he says. "It's so easy to sound shit if there's not authenticity there." He says the process followed what a friend calls the six stages of creativity: "Stage one, this is great! Stage two, this is OK. Stage three, this is shit. Stage four, I am shit, which is the worst. Stage five, this is OK. Stage six, this is great!"

O'Brien says that there will be more EOB albums and this one will occupy him for the coming year, which suggests that Radiohead will

have to wait a while. "Yeah, we've only made two albums in 10 years," he says. "We still have meetings. We're brothers. But I think everybody's enjoying doing their thing for a bit. For everybody to be solely defined by the band is really unhealthy. A band is a beautiful thing but its roots are in school so it's quite weird. You >>

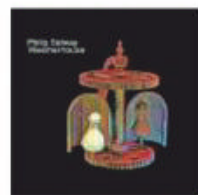
"The last thing anybody needs is a shit album from somebody from Radiohead."

► Are You Receiving? ◀

The best other extra-curricular transmissions from Radiohead members.

Philip Selway Weatherhouse

(BELLA UNION, 2014)



The drummer's solo excursions began with the stark folk of 2010's *Familial* but this follow-

up explored a more expansive sound. Assisted by electronic artist Adem Ilhan and experimental multi-instrumentalist Quinta, Selway crafts an atmospheric, creeping rock record, chiming with some of Radiohead's more soothing moments.

Thom Yorke Anima

(XL, 2019)



Feelings of dread and anxiety have been a constant in the frontman's

work but they strike a contemporaneous chord on *Anima*, his third solo album. Tetchy electro mixes with lurching strings and claustrophobic vocals, best of all on the swooping *Not The News*. Yorke's best record outside of the band that made him.

Jonny Greenwood Inherent Vice

(NONESUCH, 2014)



One of the best guitarists of his generation has reinvented himself as a sought-after

composer in his work away from Radiohead. Greenwood has created an eclectic variety of film scores and classical pieces over the past two decades and this soundtrack to Paul Thomas Anderson's private eye caper melds orchestral swells and hazy rock grooves.

Colin Greenwood Amir by Tamino

(COMMUNION, 2018)



The Radiohead bassist is the sole member not yet to make a solo album, but he has

been involved in other projects. He plays bass on a track from this 2018 debut LP by Belgian-Egyptian artist Tamino, who possesses a falsetto singing style reminiscent of Jeff Buckley and performs anguished ballads in the vein of Bends-era Radiohead.

Movin' on up: "You need to go out there and experience some life," says O'Brien.



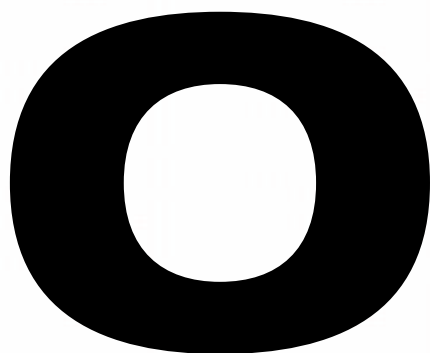
“There’s so much
stuff I want to do...”
Ed O’Brien prepares
to go to work.



“I’m trying to say, ‘Yes, there’s a lot of darkness and shit but there’s hope here.’ Fear exhausts you. It reduces you. Hope expands you.”

need to go out there and experience some life.”

What he’s found from talking to older musicians such as Finn and Marr, and offering a friendly ear to younger ones like Foals, is that most bands encounter the same issues. “Everybody gets fed up with the band they’re in at times because bands, by their inherent nature, are dysfunctional. Johnny Marr told me a brilliant story about when The Smiths split up. He was seeking Paul McCartney’s advice, expecting some very deep reply. And McCartney goes, *[shrugging]* ‘That’s bands for you.’ And it is!” He throws up his hands and laughs. “It’s fucking brilliant!”



O’Brien’s favourite Beatle is, of course, George: the spiritually inclined guitarist who took a while to step into the spotlight. “George Harrison really went there,” he says, settling onto a sofa in the TV room. “He knew the nature of reality.”

O’Brien’s conversation ricochets from Carl Sagan to Walt Whitman, Joseph Campbell’s *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* to the Tibetan Book Of The Dead, near-death experiences to quantum physics. At a Rio carnival dinner in 2012, he found himself explaining the Englishman’s spiritual cringe to Kanye West. “I said, ‘If you ask any white British artists whether they believe in God, I reckon 95 per cent would say no.’ And he could not believe it. Whereas you go to America and spirit is in the music. We go, *[sighing]*, ‘Oh, they’re thanking God again,’ but there’s a general humility. I’m trying to be open. Coming from Oxford, I was very closed. You push that stuff away. I stopped doing that about 20 years ago and I’m so much happier.”

Edward O’Brien, as he prefers to call himself these days, comes from “a dynasty of osteopaths”. His sister and both parents are practitioners, while his American maternal grandmother introduced craniosacral therapy to the UK in the 1930s. The way O’Brien tells it, the only muscle the O’Briens couldn’t master was the heart. If a character in a movie said, “I love you,” he remembers, his dad would tut, “Bloody Americans.” “Our parents grew up in the trauma and the shadows of two long wars that forced people into survival mode,” he says. “There was little room for emotions.” His parents divorced when he was 10. “It sounds ridiculous but it did fuck me up for a long time,” he says, apologising for a perfectly normal reaction. “You weren’t allowed to process it.”

O’Brien developed chronic, low-level depression, which he illustrates by pressing his hand down, as if holding a head under water. He resists the Meeting People Is Easy stereotype of Radiohead as the world’s glumest band (“It wasn’t all doom and gloom. We laughed a lot”), but admits that after the OK Computer tour finished in 1998 he hit a low. “I tried to fill that hole with alcohol, drugs, all the usual

things. And then you realise you have to go in.” Around 2002 he gave up alcohol and started meditating daily and the depression lifted. As a formerly repressed middle-class Englishman, it’s no wonder he loves Aldous Huxley’s 1954 mescaline odyssey, *The Doors Of Perception*. “He was an ex-Etonian, couldn’t be more English, yet he goes to these places and tries this stuff.”

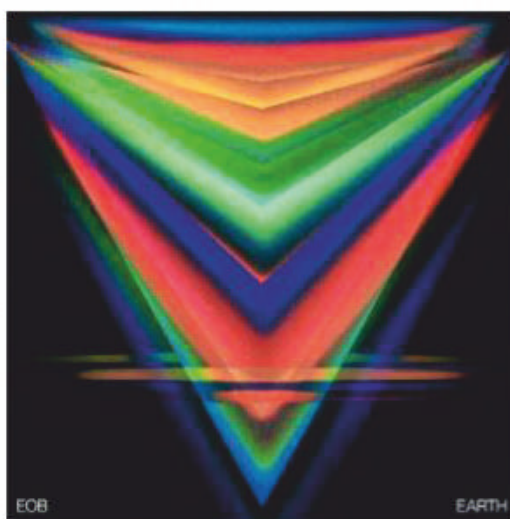
Like many people of his generation, O’Brien used to find his epiphanies on a Saturday night. He went to study economics at Manchester University in 1987, just as the Hacienda was transforming into an acid house mecca. “We didn’t get any ecstasy,” he says. “I was a bit scared of the drugs. But it was exciting seeing the Hacienda change within a year. I loved what it was doing to the guitar bands. You could feel a whole generation change.”

In 1990 he graduated and moved back to Oxford. While he waited for Thom Yorke to finish university, he worked in a bar and attended illegal raves in nearby fields and quarries. “What I loved was everybody began to love each other, the planet, the Earth... That was a spiritual thing.” He pauses. “Of course, there were drugs.”

Had he, um, conquered his fear by that point?

“Yes,” he laughs. “Oh yeah. I’d worked through that. But I’ve never been a caner. I’ve always wanted to get to that state of presence and euphoria rather than *[gurning]* eeeuuurrrgggh. And the band was the most important thing.”

O’Brien seems to have always been looking for different manifestations of communal transcendence, whether at the Hacienda, Rio carnival or Glastonbury, which he celebrates



EOB’s Earth album: O’Brien says he’s “trying to see the bigger picture.”


in EOB’s wide-eyed mantra Shangri-La. One year he and fellow up-all-nighter Lars Ulrich went in search of the Glastonbury Dragon, which must have been quite a sight for passers-by. He’s even become fascinated by the noodly American jam band Phish: not the music so much as the culture. “It’s like their rave, but before rave.” Raves, he says with wonder, “are like going to Chartres cathedral in the Middle Ages: you hear this music and it uplifts you.”

Who would have predicted that someone from Radiohead would become a beacon of come-together optimism in the grey dawn of the 2020s? “It’s easier said than done,” he says with a bleak laugh. “Over Christmas I actually thought I’d got my depression back.” He means the election. “I couldn’t remember a time when there was less fanfare about entering a new decade. Why? Because we’re all shit-scared about what lies ahead.”

He allowed himself just one blast of pure rage on the album, Banksters. “I was really fucking angry. There were two things. One is that someone very close to me defrauded me. And the other was what happened in 2008 *[the financial crisis]*. The fuckers! And I went to college with some of them!” Otherwise he’d rather focus on green shoots of progress, such as Black Lives Matter, #MeToo and the emotional openness of younger generations. “I wanted to make a record that had hope and love and light.”

Earth was originally called Pale Blue Dot, after Carl Sagan’s book about the need “to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we’ve ever known.” The zero-gravity reverie Mass is a tribute to O’Brien’s Radiohead-loving astronaut friend Michael Massimino. “When you go into orbit you see Earth for what it is,” he rhapsodises. “Mike says it’s a very spiritual thing. You feel this beauty and also this sadness.”

This, then, is EOB’s cosmic mission statement. “We’re living in a profound moment of change,” he says. “I don’t want to be Panglossian and say everything’s going to be alright. No, it might not be all right. But what I try to do on the record is see the bigger picture – almost like this view from space. I’m trying to say, ‘Yes, there’s a lot of darkness and shit but there’s hope here.’ Fear exhausts you. It reduces you. Hope expands you.”

Ed O’Brien needs space. 

“My
music
isn’t
for
everyone”

South London’s **Floho** weaves brilliantly ghostly rap that stands convincingly apart from the crowd. **Kate Hutchinson** meets her on home turf to discover that suits her just fine. “I’m 100 per cent an alternative kid...”

Photography: **Andrew Cotterill**

FLOHIO

**Going with the...:
Floho, aka Funmi
Ohio, shows Q
around SE16,
February 2020.**



**“Gothic rap queen”
Floho looks to “keep
on moving forward.”**



The number 16 follows Flohio around.

She was born on the 16th of September, lives in the London postcode SE16 and her debut release came out in 2016. But it gets weirder. She'll board a flight and her seat will be on aisle 16, she says. And – really – we happen to sit down at table 16 for our interview. In numerology, if you believe in that sort of thing, 16 usually indicates a spiritual awakening and Flohio sensed it meant good luck. So she got the digits inked smack bang in the middle of her collarbone, as a permanent totem of positivity. “When I’m doing something good,” she says, “it sneaks in.” She pulls down her T-shirt to show off the new tattoo. “Then I know I’m on the right path.”

The path today was supposed to be a little different, a tour of Flohio’s favourite haunts around South-East London, where the 28-year-old rapper grew up and still lives with her mum. There’s time for a few surly photographs – “When do I ever smile?” she says, flashing a smirk – and to be recognised, as a young guy bounds over to fistbump her. We briefly pass a pawn shop and, though it’s hardly Uncut Gems, she dives in and surveys the counter to show her appreciation of bling. Then the heavens open and it’s time to take shelter in a diner, with Elephant & Castle on the entrance in neon lights.

Whether superstition has a part to play or not, Flohio has gradually become one of the UK’s most intriguing rappers. Over the past four years, her lickety-split flow and two EPs of boisterous kid-next-door energy and industrial menace have marked her out from the ever-expanding crop of MCs. She’s also a bit of a lone wolf. There is no entourage, no stylist and, to her dismay, no new sportswear at the Q shoot. The only sign of rock star behaviour is that she is 20 minutes late. As British black music balloons bigger than ever before, Flohio does seem a little out on her own, and not just because she’s an unsigned, independent artist. Or – still – a rare female rapper to puncture the mainstream and make it onto the taste-making BBC Sound Of... list, as she did last year.

Musically she is slippery and tricky to place. When Flohio first emerged four years ago she was wrongly called a grime artist because, she says, “when you’re black and you start rapping, you just get stuck in the urban category, bam, that’s it.” But even though she shares a “fast, techy flow” that is similar in tone to a lot of grime, her style is typical of a new generation of British MCs, especially those from the African and Caribbean diaspora, who have a cavalier approach to genre and pull from varied rap styles. Their sounds bridge the UK, the US and often Africa, too, but with a London postcode-specific pride, whether it’s Afro-swing or drill.

Flohio flows on top of darker beats than most; broadly, she makes left-field rap in a similar sphere to similarly uncategorisable artists like Kojey Radical, slowthai and Little Simz and calls herself “100 per cent an alternative kid”. But her music is heavier on the horror strings and ghostly effects than her peers. She’s been called a “gothic rap queen,” to which she responds, “that’s awesome. That’s lit!” There’s no particular affinity with, say, The Sisters Of Mercy; rather, her influences underline her generation’s ambivalence to what was and wasn’t once considered cool. She brings up some unlikely dark-pop one-hit-wonders without a hint of irony: “I really liked t.A.T.u, you know what I mean?”

That gothiness, however, seems to suit her nature and her music’s more abrasive sounds lend a bolshiness that she perhaps once lacked. In person, Flohio veers between introversion and braggadocio, although when she was younger, she says she wasn’t so confident. “All my life I’ve been known to be a quiet girl,” she says. “I never felt the need to be the centre of attention. I can’t even lie, it felt like my voice didn’t matter then.” For years she wouldn’t listen to her music

because she “found my voice a bit annoying. I felt like I sounded like a little kid still.” Even though she was rapping “the slickest shit, it’s not gonna hold no weight cause of my voice.” She says that people can often get the wrong impression of her because she’s “a lady of minimal words.”

“All my life I’ve been known to be a quiet girl. I can’t even lie, it felt like my voice didn’t matter.”



Getting into her “fast, techy flow” at Lowlands Festival, Netherlands, August 2019.

Flochio was born Funmi Ohio in Nigeria and her parents relocated to London when she was eight years old. Her family was middle class – her father, a retired pilot who wasn’t around much and her mum, a businesswoman, sent Flochio’s older sister to boarding school. Often she would find herself left to her own devices but it was the studio sessions at Salmon Youth Club, in Bermondsey, around the corner from where we’re sat, and at Downside Fisher Youth Club near Tower Bridge, that helped focus her on music. “One of the youth workers told me to go on YouTube and watch artists I like,” she remembers, and she was drawn in particular to videos by American hip-hop heavyweight Lil Wayne. “After I heard him, I wanted to rap.”

But not everybody believed that Flochio was cut out for a music career. If you’re a rapper that happens to be a woman, there used to be only a few options available to you: when Flochio was growing up, there were “the Kims and the Foxys,” she says, meaning hypersexualised rappers and infamous arch nemeses Lil’ Kim and Foxy Brown. Or there were the Da Brats and Missy Elliotts, who wore sportswear and evoked a subtler side of femininity. Flochio was naturally drawn to the latter, although not everyone in her family was convinced that rapping was right for her. “There were people around me telling me that being a female rapper wouldn’t work for me,” she says. “These were the people I knew. Maybe because I was too tomboyish and to them, they don’t see many rappers [*like that*]. But I’m such a strong-headed being that I carried on anyway.”

These days she prefers to call herself androgynous. She’s just been on the front row at London Fashion Week and seems to revel in the ambiguity that high fashion can offer. “They should have given birth to me on the runway of a fashion show,” she says with swagger. “It brings out that androgyny in me. You know, I appreciate my masculine side, I appreciate my feminine side. I have my flipping nails painted and shit, you know. It doesn’t even feel glam, it just feels like I’m being a rock star, man.”

After college, Flochio was not ready to step it up yet. She took a graphic design internship at the electronic indie label Ninja Tune, which parlayed into a full-time job. You might think that that would be an obvious inroad to a music career, but she says that she “never even knew anything about record labels while I was there. Signing with anybody at that time was so far from my mind.” Even so, the label’s electronic outlook seems to have stuck and she tends to gravitate towards underground club beatsmiths like Jimmy Edgar and L-Vis 1990, as well as the experimental hip-hop of production unit God Colony. Another one of her breakthrough tunes is the dubsteppy Wealth, a team-up with ravey Berlin duo Modeselektor.

Even after her first big track, SE16, in which she shouts out her Bermondsey

postcode, however, she still wrestled with her shyness. At an event to celebrate the greatest MCs of all-time back in 2017, Flochio performed eyes down as if no one could see her through her plaits. She laughs at the memory and says she had to adapt to playing live shows fast, especially as tracks like Bands, on which she rapped how “Grenfell tower couldn’t burn me out”, brought her to wider attention. Now, “being in front of hundreds and thousands of people,” she says, “there’s no way you’re doing that without confidence.” She does, however, have a hustler mentality: you just have to listen to her lyrics to hear how, as one reviewer said, “seeking to prove something” is “her default mode”.

“I’m constantly proving myself,” she nods in agreement. “I have to prove myself because I’m dressed like this” – she’s wearing a baggy hoodie, long-sleeve T-shirt and yellow corduroys, as if she might nip off down the skate park – “or because I’m in the midst of all boys and I’m the only girl. It’s tiring!” Those boys, she says, are the friends she grew up with in Bermondsey. She rarely mentions other rappers in interviews and, though I can’t claim to have read everything, I haven’t yet seen a Stormzy or a Dave or an AJ Tracey big her up.

“I think because it’s so small everyone’s fighting for themselves,” Flochio says of the UK scene. “A new rapper is born everyday.” In America, she says, it’s different – there is more of a culture of co-signing and mentorship. “Their elders are legends. It costs nothing for Jay-Z to be like, ‘J. Cole, come on board.’” But in England, continues Flochio, there’s less room at the top. And besides, she says, she’s not sure whether anyone of them even like her tunes. “I feel like my music isn’t for everyone and it feels like no one wants to work with me, in a sense. Maybe I’m too left-wing, I’m too industrial.” She pauses. “It would be nice to get support, obviously. I dunno, maybe if I had the right song that appeals to them...”

It’s different with Little Simz, whom she recently supported on tour and who dished out sound advice. “I felt like I wasn’t doing enough in the studio and she was like, ‘Don’t beat yourself up, don’t feel like you need to keep dropping release after release,’” says Flochio. “Do your tour and when you’re ready, do your music.” But it also seems that Simz’s crossover success, from making dystopian beats to, last year, embracing a new swing with her album Grey Area and earning a Mercury nomination, has given Flochio some reassurance. “It feels like I’m not on the same level as anybody,” she says. “I’m just on my own. And everyone’s on their own wavelengths. But when Simz started, she was in her own bubble as well. Look at her now.” Simz’s breakthrough, Flochio says, suggests that “everyone’s definitely becoming more open-minded. She just kept moving forward, so I’ve got to keep on moving forward.”

Flochio may still be waiting for her big moment in the UK but overseas, her profile is rising fast, in places like Mexico, Russia and Poland (“The shows in Mexico are so wild, man! Flipping hell! Flochio goes off in Mexico!”).

Five more new-gen UK MCs to check out

CHE LINGO

The rapper signed to Idris Elba’s record label with the single, **My Block**, calling out British police brutality.

Hear This: **My Block (single)**

LAVA LA RUE

Ladbroke Grove’s Lava deploys tasteful spoken word about self-love and LGBT solidarity over jazzy soul-pop.

Hear This: **Stitches (LP)**

AITCH

Manchester-born 20-year-old scamp who reached Number 2 in the Top 40 last year with Taste (Make It Shake).

Hear This: **Rain (single)**

NSG

Six-strong Hackney collective who blend the rump-shaking sounds of West Africa, Jamaica and UK.

Hear This: **Ourself (single)**

JAY1


Drill-inspired flow from this fast-rising Coventry rapper and UK chart-botherer.

Hear This: **Flex (feat. JB Scofield) (single)**



Aitch

Lava La Rue

A full-page photograph of Floho, a Black woman with short braided hair, wearing red-rimmed sunglasses and a green velvet jacket over bright yellow pants. She is posing with her hands raised in front of her, palms facing forward, in a gesture often associated with her music. The background is a blurred wall with graffiti and a red and black striped pattern on the right.

Different strokes:
“It feels like I’m not
on the same level as
anybody,” says Floho.

She says that even if her overseas fans can’t understand what she’s saying, the “energy cuts through”.


“If the music is good then no one cares about language barrier, really and truly,” she says.

Floho reckons it’s only a matter of time before UK rap breaks big in America, although she knows that’s been a line of questioning since Skepta’s *Konnichiwa* album put grime back on the map four years ago. What’s interesting though is that rappers from the States, she says, are increasingly looking to producers here to supply the music. “New-school rappers from America are jumping on UK production beats and going viral like crazy,” such as Pop Smoke, who had been teaming up with drill beat-makers from London. (She’s gutted, at the end of our interview, to hear the news that Pop Smoke has been murdered in a shooting and whips out a selfie that they had taken just a few days earlier.)

By the sound of her new music, Floho certainly has the US in her sights. Her forthcoming “mixtape” (she’s very quick to state that it’s not an album) is called *Unveiled* and is a

trip through mutant horror-trap and other more Americanised rap sounds, slower and more accessible songs produced by, among others, Fred, the whizz behind Ed Sheeran’s No.6 *Collaborations Project* and many of the tracks on Stormzy’s *Heavy Is The Head*. On the title track, memeable phrases such as “more hype, more rage” and “this night insane/lifestyle untamed” suggest Floho in party mode, letting looser than on her previous singles, the ones where she felt she had more to prove.

She says that *Unveiled* is a carefree representation of tour life, less focused than her debut LP will be. “I’m just hopping in studios and not even thinking about it,” she says, “Whatever that vibe was that day, we captured it, slapped it in.”

Floho’s own vibe is hard to pin down. To quote a word Floho uses abundantly, she appears to revel in flipping expectations. Next, she’d like to work with avant-garde electronic producer Klein just as much as she wants to create a show-stopping television piece, like Dave’s performance at the BRIT Awards the night before. Where she’s going, she doesn’t need good luck. 

**“They should have
given birth to me
on the runway of
a fashion show.
It brings out that
androgyny in me.”**

MARK LANEGAN

WASH BACK FOR A

One-time Screaming Trees singer and full-time legend **Mark Lanegan's searing memoir **Sing Backwards And Weep** covers a lot of ground: a hard-as-nails upbringing, his journey through the choppy waters of grunge stardom, loads of sex and violence, serious drug addiction, and a tremendous beef with Liam Gallagher... but in this extract he goes off into the night on a desperate search for his special sleeping bag.**

“I was only ever motivated into action by one of two things: pain or pleasure”: Mark Lanegan, back in 1993, tells it like it is.





In the '90s, major labels spent sick amounts of money making videos that might never be seen by anyone, putting their bands on the road, and especially recording albums. Almost all of it was paid from recoupable advances that bands would ultimately be on the hook for, so unless you were lucky enough to have a hit and sell a shitload of records, you were simply racking up a huge debt with the company, money that would eventually come out of any royalties you might make but also money that was in most cases never recouped. Record companies spent vast amounts of dough signing a bunch of bands, only to throw them like wet dog shit against a wall and wait to see which ones stuck and which would slide to the ground, out of sight, into oblivion.

Despite the disaster that was our first tour on Epic, we were shortly thereafter booked on another tour of the US. After six

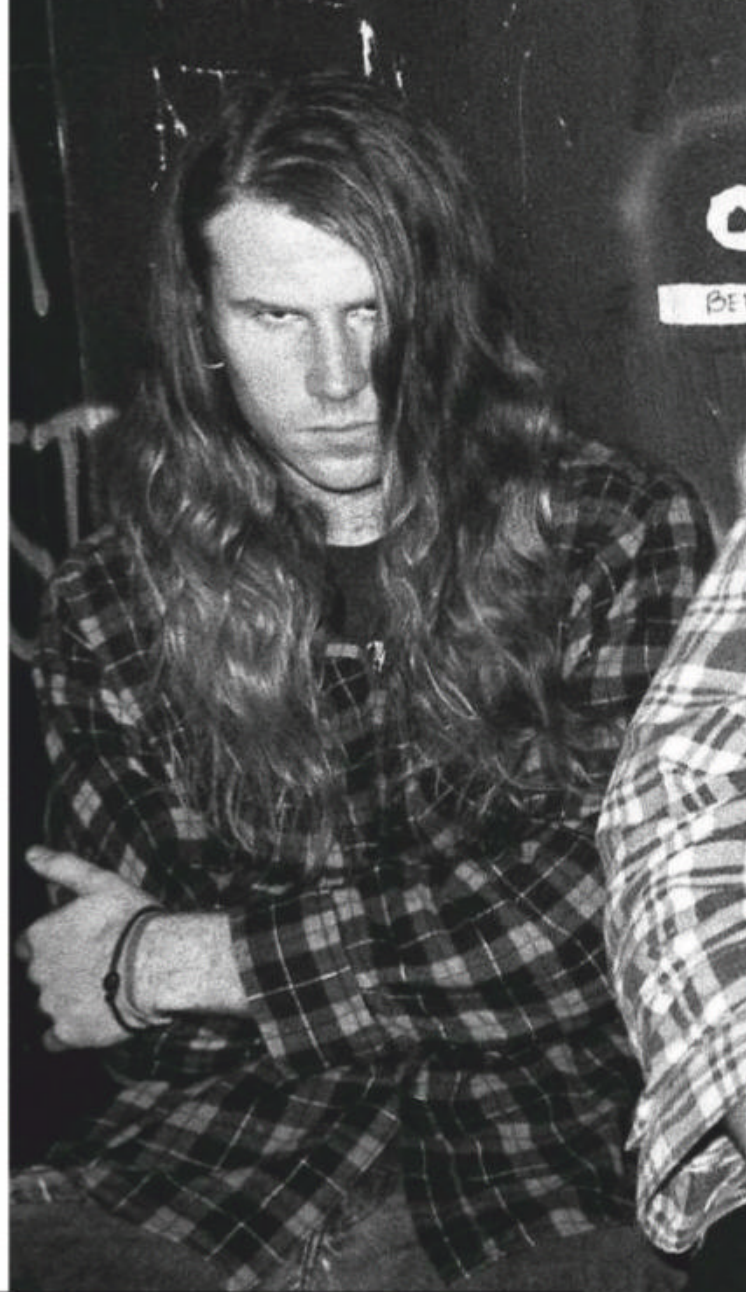
years as a band, we would have our own tourbus for the first time, an expense paid for by the record company as “tour support.” We were to meet the bus early one morning in the same Green Lake, Seattle, neighbourhood where I still lived with Dylan [Carlson, *Earth* singer/guitarist] and where, by now, nearly the entire band lived within a few blocks of each other.

The night before leaving, I started searching through my stuff to find my sleeping bag, one thing I always took with me on the road. After scanning the place, I could find no trace of the brand new one I'd recently bought and planned to take with me the next day. I had slept in a bag on the road for years: on the couch in our van, while forced to share a motel-room bed with a bandmate, even if I got my own room. I disliked sleeping on the suspect sheets of the shitty sub-par motels we frequented, and there was no way I was sleeping on a tourbus in some cum-stained bunk where hundreds of scumbag rockers had jacked off into their socks without a sleeping bag now. When evening rolled around and I'd still not located it, I asked my roommates if anyone had seen it.

“Oh fuck, man, I forgot to tell you. Your sister came by and grabbed some of your stuff a while ago. She said it was okay with you.”

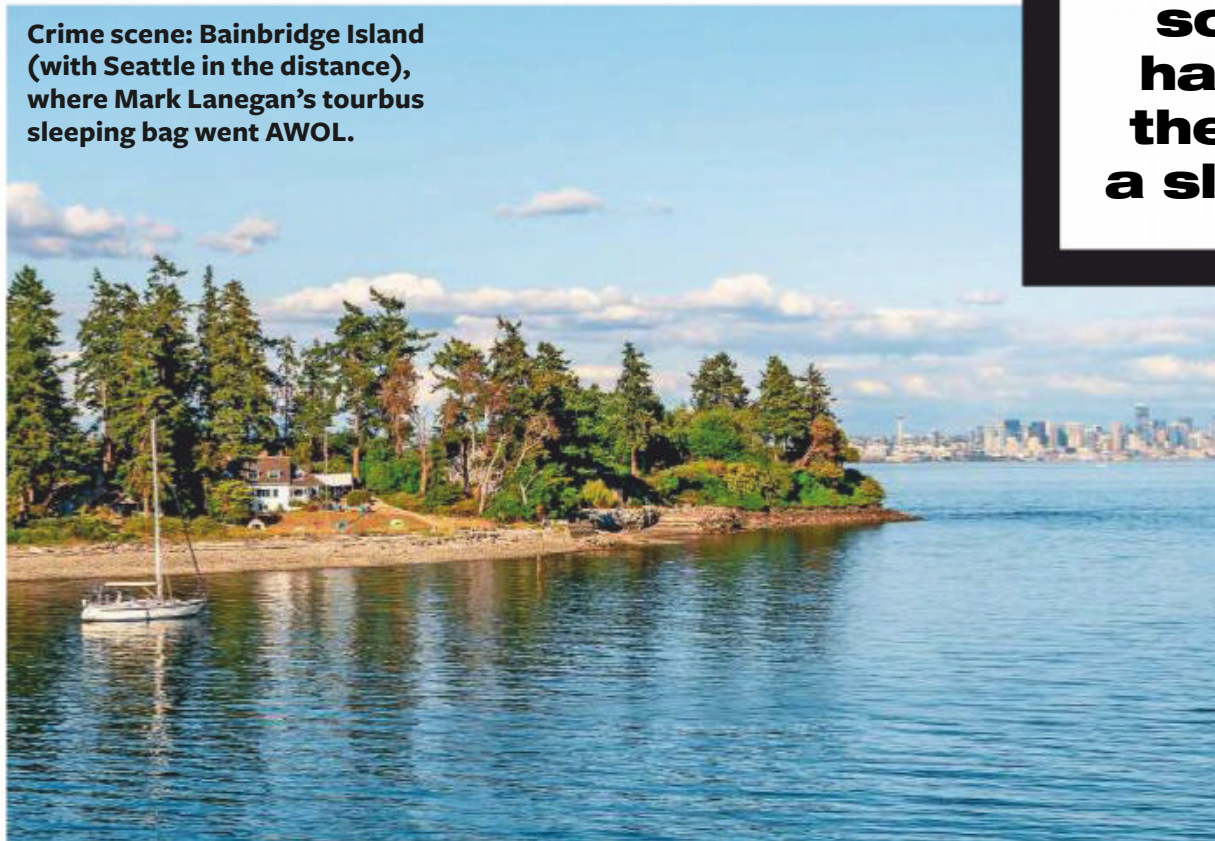
I straightaway hit the roof. For years, my older sister Trina had been coming by my place and simply taking whatever she pleased from my room for herself. I'd once stopped by the place where she lived with her darkly deranged husband and had been pissed off to find a lamp, an antique standing ashtray, and some of my other belongings in their front room. We'd had

Happy campers: the joys of touring are plain to see for Mark Lanegan's band Screaming Trees (from left, Lanegan, Van Conner, Sean Hollister, Gary Lee Conner), backstage at the Fulham Greyhound, London, February 1990.



“There was no way I was sleeping on a tourbus in some cum-stained bunk where hundreds of scumbag rockers had jacked off into their socks without a sleeping bag now.”

Crime scene: Bainbridge Island (with Seattle in the distance), where Mark Lanegan's tourbus sleeping bag went AWOL.



a violently tempestuous relationship as children, as teenagers, and into our young adulthood but had slowly become friends. By this time, I considered our relationship to be a close one. This just made me that much angrier when I found out she'd taken an item essential to my touring comfort. I called her on the phone and demanded she return it at once. To my acute vexation, she told me she didn't have it but had taken it out to her husband's sailboat, currently moored in the middle of a bay on Bainbridge Island, a ferry ride from Seattle. Determined to have it back, I demanded she go get it.



"No can do, bro, I'm all tied up. Just go buy a new one."

I had just bought this bag and would be damned if I was gonna turn around and spend money on another one. Plus there was nowhere open that time of night to get one.

"How do I find the boat?" I asked impatiently.

"It's not really easy but here's what you do. Take the ferry to Bainbridge, drive around the island to Eagle Harbor Drive Northeast. There you take a left and will eventually come to a dirt road. Follow that to the end and you'll come to a chain-link fence with a shed on the other side. There's a small hole in the fence but if you can't fit through it, just climb over. Then, next to the shed there's an old rowboat that belongs to whoever owns the property. Take the boat, get in the water, and row out to the middle of the bay. You're gonna need a flashlight to find our boat because it's just one of many

that are moored out there in the water. It's white with a green roof."

I was so pissed off that I hung up the phone before she was even done talking, but I had scribbled down her vague directions. If I wanted to get over there and back before the last ferry of the night, I had to leave now. My girlfriend Anna had planned on spending a final romantic evening with her touring, ne'er-do-well boyfriend. She grumbled but eventually agreed to join me in my quest to retrieve the sleeping bag.

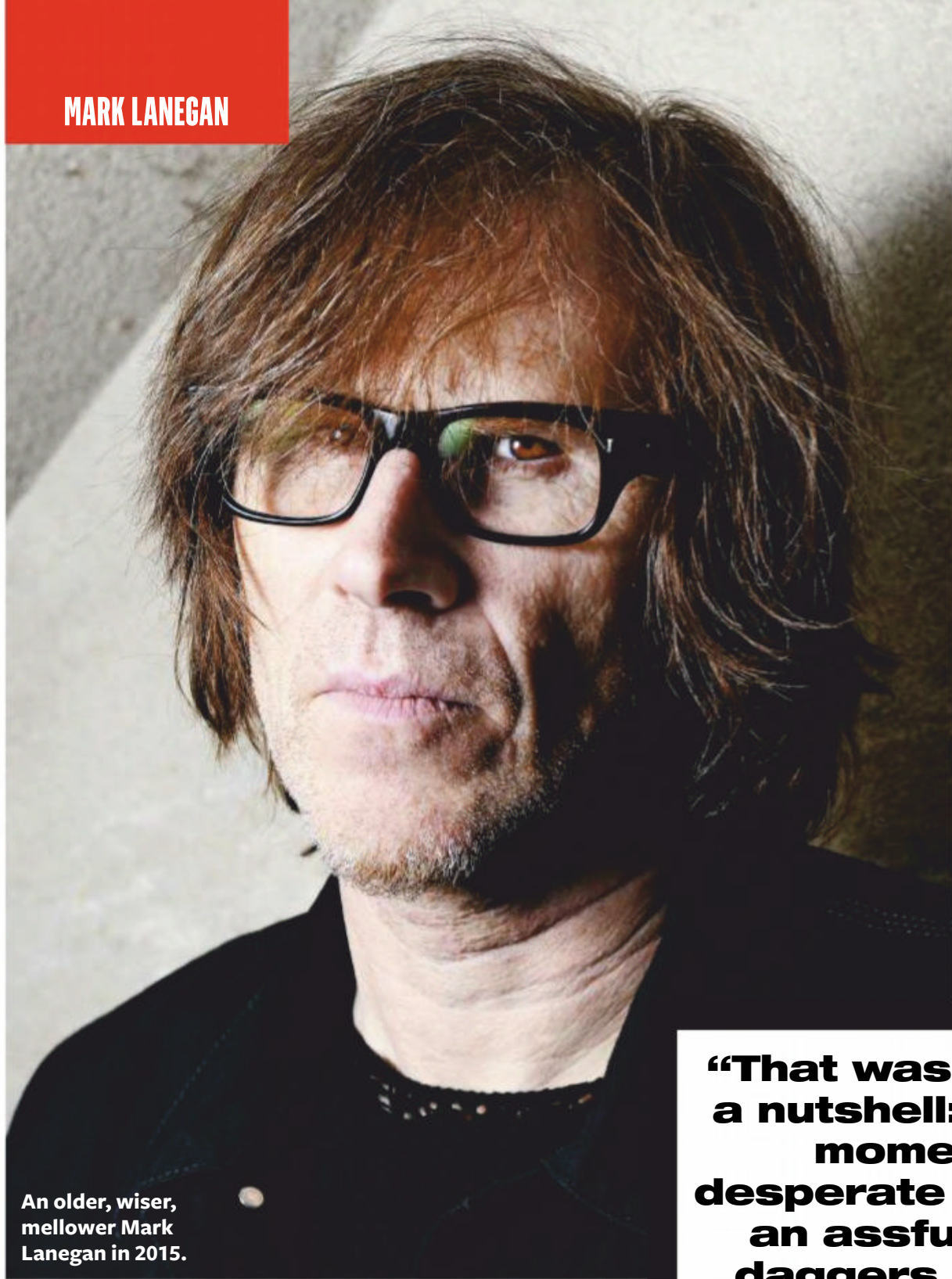
After exiting the ferry, we followed my sister's directions all the way to the fence. The hole was so small neither one of us could fit through, so I hoisted Anna to the top of the fence and then followed her up and over. Not knowing who or what we might encounter, I quietly searched for the rowboat we had been instructed to "borrow." We slipped it into the water and began rowing for what seemed like forever

out toward the shadowy figures of these hulking vessels in the middle of the bay. With only the wholly insufficient illumination from the tiny flashlight we'd found in the glove compartment of Anna's car, we finally came upon a large, decrepit sailboat that, judging from the peeling white-and-green paint job, I figured must be my sister's boat. After rowing completely around the outside of it, we finally found a way up to the deck and after tying the rowboat to the ladder, climbed aboard.

I brought the flashlight down into the dank, terrible-smelling cabin and there on the floor, covered in the hair of my sister's Great Dane and soaked in some kind of foul-smelling boat motor oil, was my previously pristine sleeping bag. Had they been there, I would have murdered my sister and her creepy husband both and hoped for a manslaughter charge.

Back on deck, as I ranted in psychotic

>>



An older, wiser, mellower Mark Lanegan in 2015.

“That was my life in a nutshell: a stolen moment of desperate pleasure, an assful of tiny daggers, then an eternity of agony.”

detail about the revenge I planned for my sister, Anna tried to calm me down.

“Hey, baby, sit down for a minute and check out the lights. It’s a beautiful view.”

I sat beside her on the roof of the sailboat’s cabin. Determined as I was to not allow anything to puncture my murderous anger, I had to admit that the view was nice. Across the water, the lights of downtown Seattle glimmered and pulsed. We sat quietly for a few minutes before I took a pipe out of my pocket and filled it with weed. We shared it, silently enjoying the still beauty of the water, the lights, and the night. At some point, we began to make out. My pants came down, she got on top of me, and we began to have sex. She knew from much experience that that was the quickest, easiest way to divert my attention from anything that irritated me. I loved being with her as I was so completely hooked on her body and her ability to quickly reason through things that sent me off on an angry tangent. I loved her talent to quiet my mind.

After fucking, we realised it had gotten late. We got back in the rowboat and I began to work with some power to get us back to the car and then to the ferry before it quit running for the night. I noticed some heat

and slight discomfort in my ass cheeks and thighs – maybe just the action of my ass against the seat on the rowboat? By the time we reached shore, it had become acute irritation. Halfway to the ferry, my ass and legs were burning. By the time we got off the boat in Seattle, I was in screaming agony, my ass totally in flames, itching and burning intensely, just the weight of my jeans bringing extreme pain.

I called Poison Control as soon as I got home, sure I’d sat in industrial solvent or some such irritant. I explained in detail to the woman on the phone exactly what had taken place directly preceding this excruciating episode.

“Well, I don’t know how else to say this,” she said, “so here goes. What I’m understanding is that you rubbed your bare butt fairly hard back and forth on an unfinished fibreglass surface for 20 minutes. You’re going to have to go to the emergency room where they will remove as many of the microscopic slivers as they can. But it’s likely you’re going to be in some pretty major discomfort for at least a week or more.”

It was two a.m. and we were meeting the

bus at six-thirty. There was no possible way I was going to the emergency room for several hours of fibreglass removal. I threw away the jeans I’d been wearing, then soaked in the bathtub until six a.m. Then I grabbed my suitcase and walked gingerly the two blocks up the street to the waiting bus.

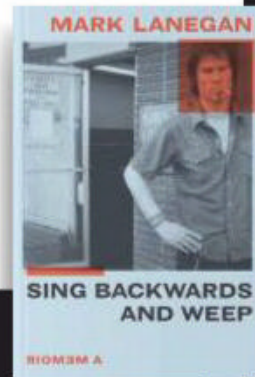
By the end of that first week, my entire ass was covered in a huge painful scab. I felt it every step, every minute of every hour of every day of that uncomfortable tour as the tiny slivers of fibreglass worked their way to the apex and out of my skin. I was able to get a script for some Percocet 10s at a clinic somewhere along the way, but the bottle of ninety was gone in a couple days. They didn’t do much for the pain in my ass, but I did enjoy the way a handful made my head feel.

That was my life in a nutshell: a stolen moment of desperate pleasure, an assful of tiny daggers, then an eternity of agony. That theme had repeated itself over and over again, a constant throughout my entire time on earth. As quickly as my mind jumped from one scheme to another, I was, at the end of the day, a slow learner, an extremely

slow learner afflicted with the lack of self-awareness to even realise it. I always thought I knew it all, but I was only ever motivated into action by one of two things: pleasure or pain.

■ © Mark Lanegan, 2020.

Extracted from Sing Backwards And Weep by Mark Lanegan, published by White Rabbit on 30 April, priced £20 in hardback. Also available in ebook and audio. Mark Lanegan’s new album, Straight Songs Of Sorrow, is released on 8 May on Heavenly.



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THE BLACK CROWES

The reunited Robinson brothers on the records that shaped them.

CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG

DÉJÀ VU (1970)



Rich Robinson: “I first heard it when I was, like, three. My dad used to play it all the time. The guy I latched on to the most throughout the years is Stephen Stills. I love the way he played guitar and the way he sang and as a child listening to those harmonies that were coming out of our console stereo, which was like a piece of furniture that had the speakers

built into it, what it pulled out of me is something I’ve always carried with me. To this day I can put this record on and have it be something totally different but something just as potent and powerful.”

BIG STAR

THIRD (1978)



Chris Robinson: “I love the slow-motion crash and burn of this record and the idea that Alex Chilton was crafting all these beautiful pop/rock songs, the deconstruction to what his avant-garde, sort of punk life would become. Kanga Roo and Holocaust were the songs that, in my young, twisted mind, were the soundtrack of my room.

At our very first show, in 1985, we played Nighttime from this record. I always loved melancholy and the beauty of Alex Chilton’s descent into whatever he was conjuring, there’s something so beautiful.”

R.E.M.

MURMUR (1983)



RR: “I remember us being in the basement when we were starting our punk rock band and this came on the radio. It was so different from any other record but I got that feeling that you get when you hear something and it moved me in such a way. It was beautiful and Southern at the same time. I always felt that Southern representation through

music, when it became this ‘Southern rock’ element of the Outlaws and Skynyrd, it wasn’t the South I was interested in. When R.E.M. came out it was Southern and delicate and sensitive.”

THE FLYING BURRITO BROTHERS

THE GILDED PALACE OF SIN (1969)



CR: “When I found out about the myth of Gram Parsons, and him being from Waycross, Georgia, his beautiful vision of this cosmic American music hit me in a big way. Again, the tragic, Southern gothic story of him is something I romanticised as well. Even the way they looked on the cover, I wasn’t even into drugs then but I knew, with the pot

leaves [on Parsons’s Nudie suit, second right], that’s cool. The record is just magic, every track is just perfect and ramshackle enough, there’s no straight edges. There’s a looseness which isn’t contrived.”

NICK DRAKE

FIVE LEAVES LEFT (1969)



RR: “I’ve really incorporated the sound of this album into how I write – Nick Drake’s love for tone and tempo and the timbre of how he approaches the songs with open tunings. The more I got into Five Leaves Left, the more I was hooked. Compositionally, the way he writes these songs and the melodies and counter-melodies and this

beautiful, simplistic voice... talk about melancholy. The string arrangements were so brilliant to me, and how his guitar playing shifted and the rhythms and pickings he was doing.”

SYD BARRETT

THE MADCAP LAUGHS (1970)



CR: “Later in life and to this day, psychedelic drugs have been a real positive for me – the universal cosmic experience and the inter-connectedness of everything. But when I first heard Syd Barrett I was yet to really know about any of this stuff. A friend gave it to me and I took it home and put it on and it was like a secret, special imaginary

friend that lived in a cave behind a beautiful flowery cherry tree that only you had access to, it was like a cult magic. I think it’s one of the most unique records. It’s a rare gem.”

SLY AND THE FAMILY STONE

FRESH (1973)



RR: “When I first heard In Time, I loved the disjointedness to it, which, from a production standpoint, the whole record has. While we were making [1992’s] The Southern Harmony And Musical Companion, I really started delving into it. My dad loved Sly Stone and we’d grown up listening to all the hits but when I heard Fresh, it was one of those

things where I was like, ‘Holy shit, what’s going on here?’ I remember listening to Frisky with Sly coming in and the layers of these keyboards and the drums, to me it was a stunning piece of work.”

BEACHWOOD SPARKS

BEACHWOOD SPARKS (2000)



CR: “By the end of the ’90s, I was living in New York and I was leaving The Mercury Lounge and this dude gives me this album and says, ‘I think you’d really like this.’ I liked the cover, so the next day, I rolled a spliff and put it on. It’s one of my favourite records. Brent Rademaker is one of the finest songwriters out there. I fell in love with this album and it

supercharged me back into indie-rock and going to more clubs and seeing more gigs. I got married a few weeks ago and Brent Rademaker and Farmer Dave were there, so it’s also a 20-year friendship.”

What a carrion: The Black Crowes' Rich (left) and Chris Robinson with their fantastic plastic, The Langham hotel, London, February 2020.

**"The Madcap
Laughs was like
a cult magic."**

Chris Robinson



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98 RINA SAWAYAMA

London-based singer channels stylish, effervescent pop on winning debut.



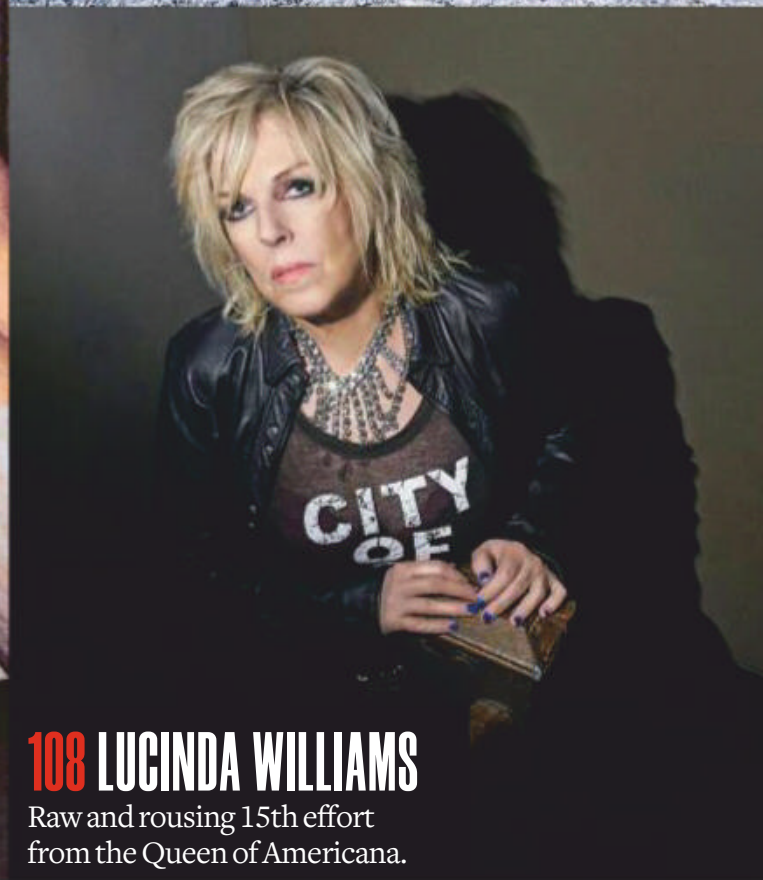
104 PEARL JAM

The grunge veterans play to their strengths on album number 11.



108 LUCINDA WILLIAMS

Raw and rousing 15th effort from the Queen of Americana.



How We Review

The Q Review is the definitive music guide. Its hand-picked writers are the undisputed experts in their fields, and they rigorously adhere to Q's world-famous star-rating system.



Classic

This is a work of genius. Essential for any collection.



Good

Solid as a rock. You will not be let down.



Fair

A decent attempt, but not ripe. Investigate at your own peril.



Poor

Ill-conceived, under-cooked. Please return to the drawing board.



Rubbish

This will boil your blood with fury and disgust.

THIS
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I Spy



Pop's voyeuristic truth-teller investigates the big questions.

JARV IS... BEYOND THE PALE

ROUGH TRADE, OUT 1 MAY

The campaign to propel his 2006 song Running The World to the top of the charts last Christmas underlined Jarvis Cocker's enduring status as pop's lurking truth-teller, a man skulking on the margins, making notes and taking names. It's been a while since he was happy just to peep through the crack in the wardrobe door, but he still likes to watch.

Beyond The Pale, his first album since 2009's Further Complications, is the work of a man kitted out with a full array of emotional surveillance equipment, its expansive space-rock and cosmic lyrics zooming in and out on humanity in all its rich chaos. Each of its seven tracks feel like they're straining to catch something important in their roving lens: a flicker of meaning, a moment of truth.

It's a quest carried out with an urgency and vigour that's been at one skinny arm's-length on his previous solo albums, these songs moving beyond the appealingly louche and into something fiercer and more critical. Based on live recordings with his new five-piece band (including harpist and keyboardist Serafina Steer), the music feels full of light, heat and possibility – fluid without being weak. The system-overload agitation of early Pulp (think Babies B-side Sheffield: Sex City or Space

from 1988) burns up its circuits. It pulsates messily like the “primordial soup” he sings about on Must I Evolve?, a song that traces the ascent and descent of man from the magic of cell division to nervous collapse at a rave. “Is this the way they say the future's meant to feel?” Cocker asked on Pulp's golden-years hit Sorted For E's And Wizz; here, he's still catching up with himself, trying to imagine what it means to be free of the past, fully evolved, the finished product. There's a ghost of Lou Reed's Hanging Around, too, the idea of somebody “still doing things that I gave up years ago.”

flat above a shop to a grand cathedral. There is a retro-erotic existential crisis on Swanky Modes, vintage sexploitation in old Camden Town; Am I Missing Something, meanwhile, is dogged by profound philosophical FOMO, a kalimba-like chime generating eerie background radiation picked up by the closing Children Of The Echo. The grand, universe-level questions peak with Sometimes I Am Pharaoh's industrial jazz clank and Throbbing Gristle static, Cocker judging puny humans with an all-seeing, capricious eye (“And always I am watching/Although you never see me”).

It's been a while since Jarvis Cocker was happy just to peep through the crack in the wardrobe door, but he still likes to watch.

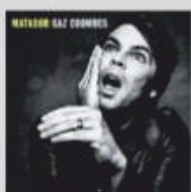
As the unabashed Leonard Cohen soft-shoe dance of Save The Whale emphasises, this is a record unfolding against a rapid data-stream of a universe. Cocker telescopes past and present like a time-lapse nature film. Songs shift from the Stone Age to “the days of VHS and casual sex”, from the Big Bang (“Maybe a small bang, actually, more of a pop”) to the domestic double meanings of House Music All Night Long, from another

Beyond The Pale isn't entirely god-like – he's just got the same initials, remember? – but at its untethered, untidy best, it shows Cocker dropping in to see what condition the human condition is in and finding it in a state of wild flux. Far out, yes, but almost too close for comfort. ★★★★★

VICTORIA SEGAL

Listen To: Must I Evolve? | Am I Missing Something | Sometimes I Am Pharaoh

Mis-Shapes Rogue albums from Britpop survivors...



Gaz Coombes

Matador (2015)

The Supergrass singer's second solo album showcased an all-grown-up Coombes flexing his experimental pop muscles, the shadow of Krautrock, folk-rock and late-period Radiohead suggesting all was no longer quite alright. ★★★★★



Luke Haines & Peter Buck

Beat Poetry For Survivalists (2020)

Auteur Luke Haines has spent

his post-Britpop years developing cultish solo albums: teaming up with former R.E.M. guitarist Buck allowed him to open the curtains slightly without letting too much light into his outsider gloom. ★★★★★



The Good, The Bad & The Queen

The Good, The Bad & The Queen (2007)

Damon Albarn is never short of side-projects, but this collaboration with Paul Simonon, Simon Tong and Tony Allen was one of his more quixotic outings, a haunted journey through a lost world. ★★★★★

He's got some bottle:
Jarvis Cocker's "dropping in to
see what condition the human
condition is in" on his debut
album as Jarv Is...





WILMA ARCHER A WESTERN CIRCULAR

DOMINO, OUT NOW

Producer du jour turns in impressive future soul debut.

Taking inspiration from such diverse sources as the orchestral works of Frank Zappa and the soundscapes of Arthur Russell, Newcastle's Wilma Archer has distilled them into potent, classically influenced soul/jazz. The result is a record in which the listener is led through various sonic twists and turns, never quite sure what lies around the corner. MF DOOM's rhymes float over chamber strings in the pulsing Last Sniff, while Cheater features Sudan Archives cooing over staccato brass and percussion. Best of all are the two tracks with Future Islands' Samuel T. Herring, eclipsing his work in his day band in the reverie-inducing soul of The Boon and sharing the vocals with Laura Groves in dreamy, Solange-like album standout Decades. Beautiful stuff. ★★★★★

TOM DOYLE

Listen To: Last Sniff | The Boon



ANNA BURCH IF YOU'RE DREAMING

HEAVENLY RECORDINGS, OUT NOW

Intimate and enjoyably ambiguous second from US singer-songwriter.

Where Detroit singer-songwriter Anna Burch's 2018 debut *Quit The Curse* was nervy and brisk folk-pop, its follow-up is a surprisingly woozy, often baleful affair. However, that's a red herring for the laser sharpness of Burch's lyrics. Much like Eleanor Friedberger, she's novelistic in her cataloguing of the interior life. "When I used to hate myself" begins Tell Me What's True, "I saw things so clearly." When observing jealousy on velvety, louche standout Jacket, couplets such as "she won't meet my eye, don't tell me she's just shy" can stop you in your tracks. In the album's pacing, there's a sense of malaise, even meandering, but it only serves to further reflect the emotional terrain covered by Burch. An intimate, close and enjoyably ambiguous record. ★★★★★

FERGAL KINNEY

Listen To: Ask Me To | Jacket



BC CAMPLIGHT SHORTLY AFTER TAKEOFF

BELLA UNION, OUT 24 APRIL

Songwriter closes his Manchester trilogy with gallows humour.

When he moved to Manchester from Philadelphia nearly a decade ago, even Brian Christinzio – aka BC Camplight – would have been surprised to find that decision proving the catalyst for an unlikely comeback and a redemptive Manchester trilogy, of which this is the final instalment. As with labelmate Father John Misty, this is piano-led adult pop that catalogues self-destruction and interior male ennui with a double-shot of gallows humour. Paranoid, doomy synths temper the classicism of Christinzio's luxuriant Harry Nilsson songwriting – never better than on organ-driven bourbon ballad I Want To Be In The Mafia.

★★★★★

FERGAL KINNEY

Listen To: I Only Drink When I'm Drunk | I Want To Be In The Mafia | Born To Cruise



WILD BILLY CHILDISH AND THE CHATHAM SINGERS KINGS OF THE MEDWAY DELTA

DAMAGED GOODS, OUT NOW

Prolific Kent outsider artist gets the blues.

The Rolling Stones were among the first British R&B groups inspired by Louisiana bluesman Slim Harpo, and here's another man of Kent drawing from the same source. Utilising Rochester's Ranscombe Studios' echo chamber, plus producer Jim Riley's blues harp skills, The Chatham Singers furnish these 12 tracks of street crackle and pop with skeletal verve. As with his previous 125-plus albums, Childish explodes notions of cultural appropriation by embedding his own aesthetic deep into originals such as The Double Axe, as well as Harpo's 1957 classic Got Love If You Want It. Mississippi or Medway, mud is mud wherever you go. ★★★★★

KEITH CAMERON

Listen To: Got Love If You Want It

**Sitting comfortably:
it's "business as usual"
for Haim on album #3.**



HAIM WOMEN IN MUSIC PT III

POLYDOR, OUT 24 APRIL

LA siblings widen their soft-rock focus.

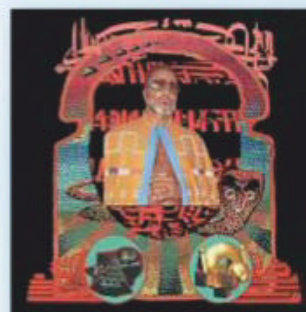
In many respects, the drolly-titled third

album from Alana, Este and Danielle Haim is business as usual for the Californian family band: *Women In Music Pt III* is chock-full of sisterly harmonising, Fleetwood Mac-style soft rock and subtle nods to 1990s R&B. Yet there are also frequent disturbances to the group's cheerily nostalgic sound. I Know Alone references 2-step garage, 3AM incorporates gloopy G-funk, while elsewhere you can find reggae rhythms, flamenco guitars and Lou Reed samples. This zeitgeist-friendly genre-hopping proves the trio are moving with the times, but it's satisfying to note that when they return to their starkly simple, powerfully melodic trademark sound on closer Hallelujah, Haim remain in a league of their own. ★★★★★

RACHEL AROESTI

Listen To: I Know Alone | Summer Girl | Hallelujah

Stranger things: Shabazz Palaces (Ishmael Butler, pictured) conjure “an atmosphere of heightened weirdness” on the new record.



SHABAZZ PALACES THE DON OF DIAMOND DREAMS

SUB POP, OUT 17 APRIL

Another way-out transmission from US rap oddball.

Ishmael Butler's last outing as Shabazz Palaces, the duo he fronts in collaboration with Zimbabwean-born percussionist Tendai Maraire, was a double concept album that imagined present day America as an alien dystopia. His fourth album is considerably shorter, if no less otherworldly in its approach, with the dynasty theme (his son Lil Tracy is a SoundCloud rapper with a taste for diamonds) far less obvious than the Afro-futurist influence of Sun Ra and George Clinton – witness, for example, Wet's space-age production and echo-effected vocals. An atmosphere of heightened weirdness prevails, not least on sparse electro slow jam Money Yoga and the woozy, outsider funk of Reg Walks By The Looking Glass, a suitably cryptic sign-off from one of contemporary hip-hop's original outsiders. ★★★★★

RUPERT HOWE

Listen To: Wet | Reg Walks By The Looking Glass

**The new album arrives
with something more
than the shrug
of its philosophical
title at stake.**



THUNDERCAT **IT IS WHAT IT IS**

BRAINFEEDEER, OUT NOW

Bass visionary and Flying Lotus collaborator's further adventures.

The surprise success of Thundercat's third album, *Drunk*, propelled by the single *Show You The Way*, helped put ageing soft-rockers Michael McDonald and Kenny Loggins on a new generation's lips and the veteran session bassist, and latter-day vocalist, into year-end charts. It also means *It Is What It Is* arrives with something more than the title's philosophical shrug at stake. Not that you'd know it from the contents, which sees the Los Angeleno beat his own path, as ever – where the gorgeous *Black Qualls*, a guest-packed hit in waiting, sits alongside the frenetic, indulgent bass workout *How Sway*. Soft soul, gibbering jazz fusion and the cyber-futurism of overseer Flying Lotus still works a collective shock. ★★★★★

STEVE YATES

Listen To: *Black Qualls* | *King Of The Hill* | *Dragonball Durag*



EMPRESS OF I'M YOUR EMPRESS OF

TERRIBLE, OUT NOW

LA's alt-pop queen embraces club culture and heady house music.

Lorely Rodriguez might have gone mainstream on 2018's *Us*, but the singer/producer's third album sees her once again embracing the off-kilter energy that made her arrival midway through the last decade so refreshing. There's still a deeply catchy element to her electronica-driven sound – the pulsing *Love Is A Drug* comes over like a DIY Dua Lipa/Janet Jackson hybrid – but Rodriguez digs deeper into rave and party culture here. She embeds herself fully into the club groove for the sweaty house of *Give Me Another Chance*; particularly impressive when you consider it's only two and a half minutes long. In fact, not much here is over three minutes, showing a sense of urgency that only goes to make this collection more vibrant. ★★ ★

LEONIE COOPER

Listen To: *Bit Of Rain* | *Void*



ROGER AND BRIAN ENO MIXING COLOURS

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON, OUT NOW

Ambient brothers combine forces beautifully.

Brothers Roger and Brian Eno's first album as a duo has been a long time coming. Fifteen years ago, Roger, an ambient composer, began writing pieces on a MIDI keyboard. His older sibling, known for the pioneering work of being Brian Eno, would then rearrange his compositions. The result is not so much conversational as a work of intriguing collision – an 18-song adventure in sparse and particular beauty, whose tracklisting reads something like a Winsor & Newton paint catalogue: *Dark Sienna*, *Verdigris*, *Cerulean Blue*. Across the wit and warmth of *Quicksilver's* keys, the glower of *Burnt Umber* and the fine, sweet elegance of *Iris*, it's less a record than a slow sensory immersion. ★★ ★

LAURA BARTON

Listen To: *Quicksilver* | *Iris* | *Spring Frost*

REN HARVIEU REVEL IN THE DRAMA

BELLA UNION, OUT NOW

Salford singer's triumphant return after eight years.

Having suffered a freak accident in 2011 that resulted in a broken back, Ren Harvieu understandably found touring her debut album, 2012's *Through The Night*,

something of a trial. The darkness she went through in the intervening years (shattered dreams, depression) is documented here in beautiful piano ballad *Spirit Me Away*. In spite of its title, *Revel In The Drama* is light-hearted too – *Strange Thing* and *Teenage Mascara* are cartoonish explorations of adolescent feelings – and collaborator Romeo Stodart of

The Magic Numbers has helped to free the singer's creativity and frame her soaring vocals in imaginative arrangements. Playing the femme fatale in showstopper *You Don't Know Me*, Harvieu's voice is set to stun. Against all odds, this is a brilliant second act. ★★ ★

TOM DOYLE

Listen To: *Yes Please* | *Spirit Me Away* | *You Don't Know Me*



Drama queen: Ren Harvieu's "creativity has been freed" on her new album.



ENTER SHIKARI NOTHING IS TRUE & EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

SO RECORDINGS, OUT 17 APRIL

St Albans genre-splicers deliver best work in years.

Enter Shikari's ecstatic marriage of post-hardcore, EDM and unbridled eccentricity has long distinguished them from their peers. And so it remains on *Nothing Is True...*, as convulsing opener *The Great Unknown* reaffirms their aptitude for breathtaking electro-rock. The all-too-sleek misfire of *The Pressure's On* aside, it's their poppier excursions that really impress, with *Crossing The Rubicon* transforming a Samuel Beckett quote into a riotous hook. The unexpected highlight comes from *Elegy For Extinction*, a rousing classical piece pairing the group with the City Of Prague Symphony Orchestra. It's the sound of grand ambition being realised. ★★★★★

GEORGE GARNER

Listen To: *Elegy For Extinction* | *The Great Unknown*



EVERYTHING IS RECORDED FRIDAY FOREVER

XL, OUT NOW

Another seismic electro-dub soundclash from XL head.

Intended to evoke the rise and fall of a classic Friday night out, XL Recordings boss Richard Russell's second outing as *Everything Is Recorded* comes off like an extended tour through UK club culture, taking in bass-heavy boom and jazz-infused soul. Elevated by Trinidad-born vocalist Berwyn, the electronic dub of *10:51 PM/The Night* is an early highlight, while slow-motion banger *12.12AM/Patients* taps the zeitgeist with verses from Manchester rapper Aitch. Yet for all the arresting cameos, it's Russell's show, the sudden deceleration into the spoken-word chill-out of *5.10AM/Dream I Never Had* showing his mastery of modern music in all its forms. ★★★★★

RUPERT HOWE

Listen To: *10:51 PM/The Night* | *12.12AM/Patients*

Future Visions

Genre-defying singer expands her - and pop music's - horizons.

RINA SAWAYAMA

DIRTY HIT, OUT 17 APRIL

Rina Sawayama first began making waves in 2017 with her excellent Rina EP, a post-ironic rush of self-consciously saccharine '90s R&B punctured by shards of industrial guitar. On her first album proper, the Japanese-born, London-bred 29-year-old substantially expands her remit, adding sax-spiked new wave, PC Music digi-pop, flamboyant '00s Eurodance and metal (hair- and nu-) to her arsenal. It's a broad church, but Sawayama never feels cluttered or jarring. Instead, the songs on this impeccably stylish record are united by knowing nostalgia, tight, memorable choruses and contemplative lyrics that tackle big topics.

That combination of arch, amusing sonics and serious, sensitive subject

matter is a surprisingly affecting one. Identity politics and family ties feature heavily here: *STFU!*, on which cartoonishly demonic rock is offset

by a twinkly bubblegum-pop chorus, was a product of Sawayama reaching the end of her tether with casual Japanese stereotyping, while *Evanesence*-like opener *Dynasty* and the gloopy, juddering R&B of *Akasaka Sad* both grapple with the concept of

hereditary pain. *Paradisins'*, which manages to recall both new-wave pop duo *Strawberry Switchblade* and Avril Lavigne's *Sk8er Boi*, relives an adolescence spent at loggerheads with her mother with palpable angst and great comic timing. Perspicacious and personal, cool and colossally enjoyable, Sawayama is both a triumph over trauma and a paean to the power of effervescent pop in practically all its forms. ★★★★★

RACHEL AROESTI

Listen To: *STFU!* | *Comme Des Garçons* (Like The Boys) | *Paradisins'*



Q&A

RINA SAWAYAMA talks to RACHEL AROESTI about not taking yourself too seriously, stadium rock and arguing with her mum...

Sawayama incorporates so many influences and styles – was making such a varied album always the plan?

"I think it happened along the way. I get bored quite quickly so it was almost like a challenge for me to write in all these different formats. I wanted to task myself with the core writing being pop, but the sound being super diverse."

Some of your genre choices, like the bombastic rock tracks, bring a comic element

to the album. Why was that important to you?

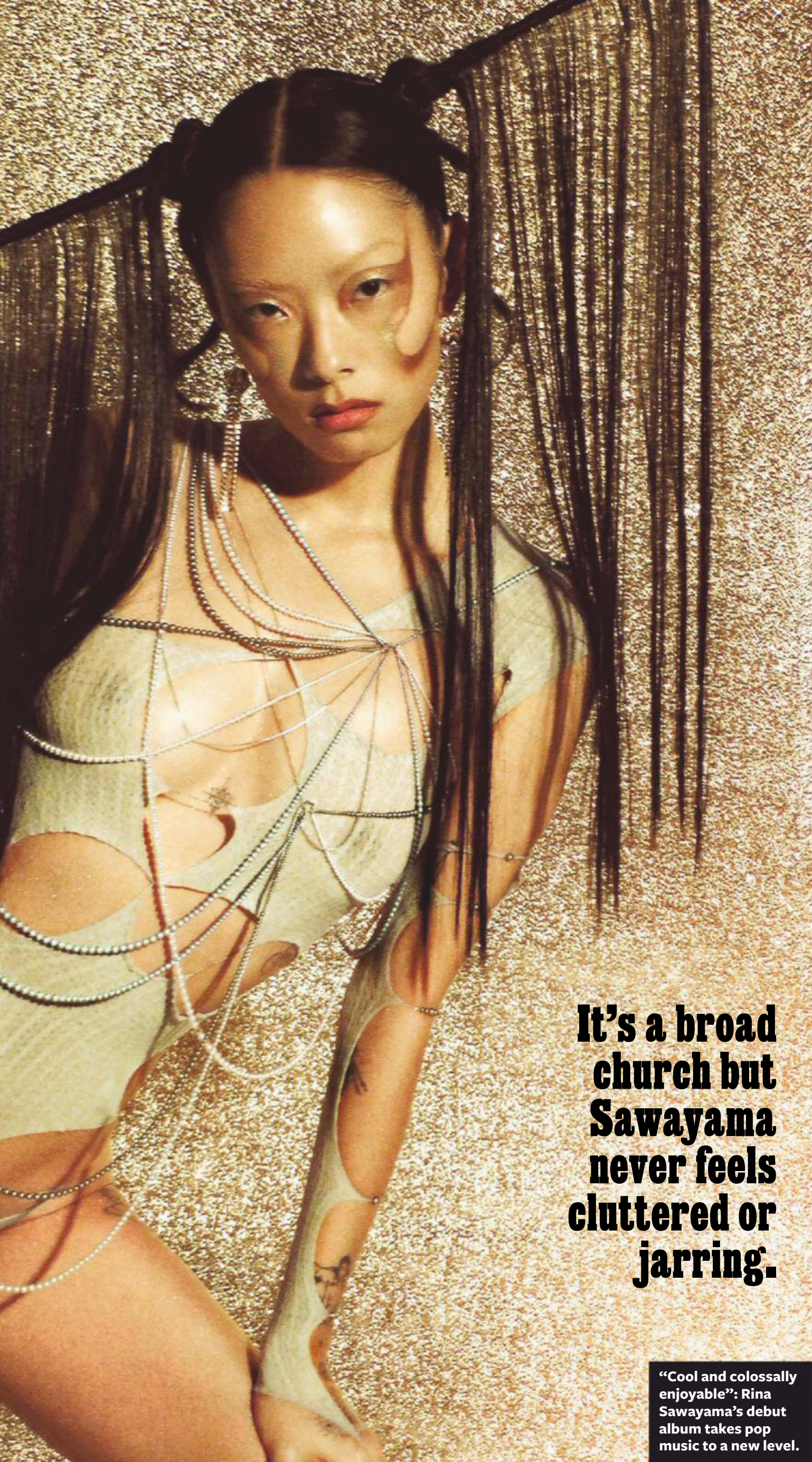
"I think when you take music too seriously, it loses a bit of charm, and I wanted my songs to be charming. With *Who's Gonna Save U Now?*, no one was asking for a stadium rock song, like ever. I was laughing a lot when I was doing the production – the ridiculousness is that I won't do stadiums for a long time."

Your lyrics are frequently very funny, too – on *Paradisins'* you humorously recount the

arguments you had with your mum when you were a teenager. What made you decide to write about that time?

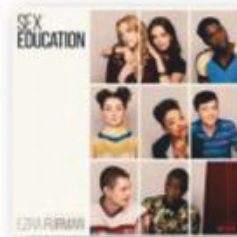
"I wanted to talk about how I let her down, but in a funny way – you can overcome a lot of pain and trauma in your life with the right kind of satire. I wanted to gamify that episode of my life – it's kind of like a cat-and-mouse game with my mum chasing me around London. I look back at that time and it doesn't seem like my life – it feels like this weird TV show."

HENDRIK SCHNEIDER



It's a broad church but Sawayama never feels cluttered or jarring.

"Cool and colossally enjoyable": Rina Sawayama's debut album takes pop music to a new level.



EZRA FURMAN

SEX EDUCATION OST

BELLA UNION, OUT 10 APRIL

Funny, flamboyant soundtrack for funny, flamboyant series.

Could there be a more perfect person to soundtrack the funny, sad, silly, serious wuketopia that is Netflix's Sex Education? Furman has provided the music for both series thus far: this collection mixing old songs (Can I Sleep In Your Brain) with just-for-the show originals (the delicate Every Feeling) and a wonderful cover or two (a version of LCD Soundsystem's I Can Change is truly sublime), all of which exhibit the unique charms of the Chicago singer/songwriter. The show itself – in which Furman and his band also made a cameo during the school dance scene – has reportedly been watched by more than 40 million people. If even just a 10th of them let a little Ezra Furman into their lives, it would be a wonderful thing. ★★★★★

HAMISH MACBAIN

Listen To: Every Feeling | Restless Year | I Can Change



FRANC MOODY

DREAM IN COLOUR

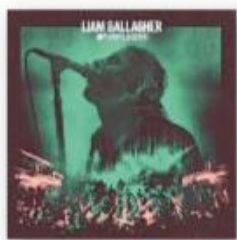
JUICEBOX RECORDINGS, OUT NOW

Sparkling, and very smooth, disco pop from North London ravers.

London duo Franc Moody came together playing DIY warehouse raves, their early gigs a sweaty mass of inebriated instrument-swapping. Not that there's anything particularly chaotic about debut album, Dream In Colour. A slick set of sparkling disco pop in which basslines snap, keyboards glisten and grooves glide effortlessly into one another, at its best it can come across like a well-buffed LCD Soundsystem (Charge Me Up's dirty funk, the Studio 54 throb of Night Flights) or Balearic Islands Phoenix (joyous closer A Little Something For The Weekend). It never strays far from the dancefloor, although a little anarchy and the odd rough edge wouldn't have gone amiss. ★★

CHRIS CATCHPOLE

Listen To: Night Flights | A Little Something For The Weekend



LIAM GALLAGHER MTV UNPLUGGED

WARNERS, OUT 24 APRIL

Strings attached: Liam shines in acoustic setting.

Famously, Liam Gallagher was a last minute no-show at Oasis's MTV Unplugged show in August 1996 (Noel took over while he smoked and drank in one of the Royal Festival Hall's boxes). This fuelled the theory that Liam was only comfortable singing with an up-to-11 wall of noise behind him, but his solo career has featured plenty of evidence this was, and is, nonsense. Following January's Acoustic Sessions EP, this official release covers his much bootlegged set in Hull last August. The likes of Once and Now That I Found You suit the stripped-back aesthetic perfectly but it's the strings-assisted version of Sad Song that is the real showstopper here: one of the great Liam Gallagher vocals, acoustic or otherwise.

★★★★

HAMISH MACBAIN

Listen To: Once | Sad Song



THE GARDEN KISS MY SUPER BOWL RING

EPITAPH, OUT NOW

Oddly cohesive total chaos from LA jesters.

New listeners might not believe that The Garden's chaotic fourth album is their most coherent to date, but Kiss My Super Bowl Ring makes good on the duo's decade of scrappy, futuristic ideas. LA twins Wyatt and Fletcher Shears have a reputation for frenzied live shows and that adrenaline overload burns through tracks that clash vintage pop-punk melodies with bone-shattering jungle loops and snippets of snarling dogs. For every screamed verse there's a genuinely soft melody, and it's unsurprising to see mischief-makers Ariel Pink, Khalif Jones and producer Dylan Brady in the credits. The Garden's uniquely garbage kind of glamour is far better than their clownish antics would suggest. ★★★★★

KATIE HAWTHORNE

Listen To: Hit Eject | Lowrider Slug



LAUREL HALO POSSESSED

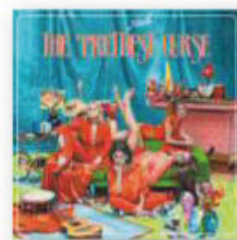
THE VINYL FACTORY, OUT 10 APRIL

Electronic visionary hits a new note on debut film score.

Laurel Halo's music for design collective Metahaven's 2018 film Possessed is often seemingly at odds with the tech documentary's unsettling examination of new forms of surveillance. She chooses to build tension very gently, letting the dread creep in almost unnoticed – until it suddenly overwhelms. On Lead, a shapeless sound of static swells to an unbearable peak; piercing strings create a tight-rope peril on Cave Walk; and siren-like drones echo through the industrial soundscape of Zeljava, named after the Croatian airbase. This skin-shivering unease is offset by the Rome Themes dotted throughout, which are luscious and stately. Halo's score is detailed and meticulous – but far more sombre than her usually playful, exuberant records. ★★★★★

KATIE HAWTHORNE

Listen To: Lead | Cave Walk



HINDS THE PRETTIEST CURSE

LUCKY NUMBER, OUT NOW

The Strokes' favourite Madrileños aim big on third album.

In old-fashioned comics, fights were often depicted by a dust-cloud full of protruding feet and fists. A Hinds song has a similar energy, a tangle of chaotic movement that somehow resolves into recognisable – and catchy – form. While the Madrid band's third album does have a new sheen of sophistication and ambition, it remains full of buoyant, ballooning pop songs and slumber-party attitude, Boy sounding like an unholy Andrew WK-Shampoo alliance, Good Bad Times raiding the Pet Shop Boys' cupboards, The Play and Take Me Back anime avatars of The Velvet Underground and Pixies. It can occasionally cloy, but on The Prettiest Curse, Hinds are on fighting form. ★★★★★

VICTORIA SEGAL

Listen To: Take Me Back | Boy | The Play

CAROLINE ROSE SUPERSTAR

NEW WEST, OUT NOW

Charismatic red-clad artist deepens her high-concept pop.

Doubling down on the vibrant pop storytelling of her 2018 breakthrough Loner, New York songwriter Caroline Rose has carved her fourth album

into a multi-faceted narrative about the quest for success. It's a tale touched with ambition, lust, despondency and, on Someone New, "breaking bread with evil men". And while there's nothing as splashily direct as Loner's trash-punk anthems Money or Bikini, Superstar coalesces into a powerful whole. The tarnished hopes of Pipe Dreams;

Back At The Beginning's cubist St. Vincent disco; the mutated Prince of Feel The Way I Want ("I'm so in love with myself/It's so romantic"): it's a record of quiet confidence, its brightness dialled down but its impact still fierce. ★★★★★

VICTORIA SEGAL

Listen To: Someone New | Feel The Way I Want | Pipe Dreams



Hedging her bets: Caroline Rose has created "a record of quiet confidence."



As he boldly trades verses with Jay-Z, Jay Electronica spins visionary religious mantras around vintage loops.



Jay Electronica: “brave and emotionally resonant.”

A Higher Power

US rapper's ambitious debut fearlessly taps into spirituality.



JAY ELECTRONICA A WRITTEN TESTIMONY

ROC NATION, OUT NOW

What connects Jay-Z, religious movement Nation Of Islam and British heiress Kate Rothschild? Answer: New Orleans-born rapper and producer Timothy Elpadaro Thedford, a long-time friend and associate of the Roc Nation founder who also became Rothschild's lover while living in London in 2012. That he's now recorded an expansive, allusive album that pays frequent homage to controversial NOI preacher Louis Farrakhan is just the latest

twist in a career that's up until now been long on promise and short on actual product.

Arriving over a decade after Act I: Eternal Sunshine (The Pledge), a beat-free mixtape based on the soundtrack to Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind, A Written Testimony changes the narrative decisively. As he boldly trades verses with Jay-Z, who appears uncredited throughout, Jay Electronica spins visionary religious mantras around vintage loops – on Ghost Of Soulja Slim unspooling quirky anecdote and mystical hosannas over militant funk and a head-spinning

accordion sample from '60s melodrama Valley Of The Dolls.

Aloof from hip-hop's consumerist obsessions, Jay Electronica recalls another rap oddball, DOOM, as he veers from Shiny Suit Theory's psychedelic soul to the twitchy, Flying Lotus-like Ezekiel's Wheel. Yet he closes out on a distinctively meditative note as A.P.I.D.T.A., or All Praise Is Due To Allah, which finds the two Jays reflecting on lost friends and family over a largely unedited instrumental by space-blues outfit Khruangbin. Brave and emotionally resonant, it's a fitting finale to an album that dares to tackle life's big questions head on. ★★★★★

RUPERT HOWE

Listen To: Ghost Of Soulja Slim | Shiny Suit Theory | A.P.I.D.T.A.



KNXWLEDGE

1988

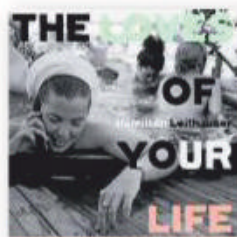
STONES THROW, OUT NOW

Kendrick-endorsed sample wizard gets funky-up.

A Los Angeles beatmaker whose profile received a sudden boost when Kendrick Lamar sampled one of his tracks on *To Pimp A Butterfly*, Glen Boothe actually has a sprawling back catalogue dating back to 2009 that includes a career-high collaboration with Anderson .Paak as Nxworries. In solo mode, though, it's Boothe's love of J Dilla that shines brightest, these 22 miniatures serving up sliced funk, jazz and soul with all the dexterity and precision of a sushi chef. Do You's mesmeric bass groove has a touch of Thundercat and Solivlife's bizarre chipmunk vocal echoes Flying Lotus, while *Minding_my Business*'s flashback to late-'80s R&B radiates a warmth often missing from other hi-tech laptop jams. ★★★★★

RUPERT HOWE

Listen To: Do You | Solivlife | *Minding_my Business*



HAMILTON LEITHAUSER

THE LOVES OF YOUR LIFE

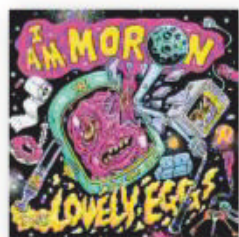
GLASSNOTE, OUT 10 APRIL

Storytelling hour from barrel-voiced former Walkmen singer.

Hamilton Leithauser's latest solo LP is a reminder of just how changeable and variegated life can be. It's a kaleidoscopic look at some of the people the singer has met over the years – strangers and friends, bad singers and bad dye jobs, living the easy life and driving Chevy Silverados. Leithauser's voice is its usual delicious scuffed-up howl, the music covers a broad indie-rock sprawl, but the focus here is the stories: from *Here They Come*, which recounts the story of a friend who would hide from life by heading to the cinema to *Isabella's* account of trust-fund existence and *Cross-Sound Ferry's* tale from the stretch of water between New York and Connecticut. ★★★★★

LAURA BARTON

Listen To: *Isabella* | *Here They Come* | *Wack Jack*



THE LOVELY EGGS

I AM MORON

THE LOVELY EGGS, OUT NOW

Psych-punk-pop electronicists on melodic return.

Not all bands have the ability to veer sharply and exuberantly between the shouty and the melodic, but for the last 14 years Lancaster two-piece The Lovely Eggs have made it their calling card. There's something irresistible about the strange choral-pop intersection of Long Stem Carnations, just as it's hard not to be stirred by This Decision's loud-hailed rabble-rousing. Across *I Am Moron* you come to see that The Lovely Eggs are an act of fine calibration of noise and sweetness, of intelligence and brutish mettle – for every punkish bout of fury, there's something as gently charming as the *New Dawn*: all avant-pop vocal layers and Lancastrian vowels. It's a winning combination. ★★★★★

LAURA BARTON

Listen To: *New Dawn* | *Long Stem Carnations*



TOM MISCH & YUSSEF DAYES

WHAT KINDA MUSIC

BLUE NOTE, OUT 24 APRIL

Divergent UK jazz talents team up to raise their game.

With his 2018 LP *Geography*, South London's Tom Misch mapped out a safe space of pastel-shaded pop-soul. So the singer-guitarist's collaboration with drummer Yussef Dayes, who also performs in jazz improv duo Yussef Kamaal, feels like a step outside that self-made comfort zone. Misch's fluid songwriting is still to the fore, as on the title track's loose-limbed shimmy, heightened by an uplifting string arrangement. But the way Dayes can shift gears, as when integrating a Freddie Gibbs cameo on the hip-hop-inflected *Nightrider* or helping power *Lift Off* towards the cosmic heights of '70s prog-jazz outfit Mahavishnu Orchestra, injects both depth and drama into the mix. ★★★★★

RUPERT HOWE

Listen To: *Nightrider* | *Lift Off*

Telling porkies: Pigs Pigs Pigs Pigs Pigs settle down for a light supper.





PIGS PIGS PIGS PIGS PIGS PIGS PIGS

VISCERALS

ROCKET RECORDINGS, OUT NOW

Heavy riffing excellence from implausibly named Geordies.

Emerging from the same Newcastle DIY scene that produced the avant-folk songwriter Richard Dawson, Pigs

x7 are a metal band who deviate from the genre's modern trappings, instead dropping anchor firmly in Black Sabbath/Motörhead waters. On their third LP, they counter the bombastic riffing of tracks such as Rubbernecker with just enough silliness and surrealism to avoid pomposity. Crazy In Blood delves into the dense droning of My Bloody Valentine – swirling, fuggy and primal – while Halloween

Bolson seethes with righteous political fury and a rallying cry of, simply, “bastards”. If you squint, it could be IDLES. As they put it on Blood And Butter, this band are “poison, made with the cheapest ingredients possible.” It's potent stuff. Visceral is an understatement. ★★★★★

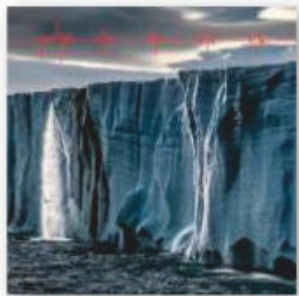
FERGAL KINNEY

Listen To: Rubbernecker | New Body | Crazy In Blood



Self-Preservation Society

Grunge veterans stick to a winning sound on album 11.



PEARL JAM GIGATON

MONKEYWRENCH
RECORDS, OUT NOW

Pearl Jam's third decade will not go down as one of their most

productive. Pearl Jam Twenty, as they titled their 20th-anniversary celebrations, was marked with a film, album, book and festival but the next 10 years have yielded a sole LP, 2013's *Lightning Bolt*. The lack of new material hasn't knocked their stock, though. The Seattle rockers are in that upper-realm of bands who've done the hard miles, who will forever be arena-sized whatever the weather, their diehard fanbase untested by half-decade sabbaticals from record releases.

Perhaps that's because it's an audience sure of what they'll get when a new album does eventually come round: sturdy rock anthems and some emotive mid-paced ballads wrapped around Eddie Vedder's rallying delivery, with a few political jabs thrown in. That's how it goes with *Gigaton*, their 11th album. Much of the material here would fit seamlessly on any of their records since 1996's *No Code*, the release that marked their diversion away from the MTV-led alternative mainstream. It's not to say *Gigaton* is without its surprises – Vedder's David Byrne-style vocals on the new wave groove of *Dance Of The Clairvoyants* and the swirling outro to *Retrograde* are pleasing new flavours to their sound – but more that Pearl Jam learned to play to their own strengths long ago. They are about as likely to start using dance beats as The Chainsmokers are to do an MTV Unplugged session.

Whether it's the stirring *Seven O'Clock*, the hurtling *Take The Long Way* or the organ-led closer *River Cross*, *Gigaton* is a reminder that Pearl Jam are a band totally comfortable in their own skin. In uncertain times, that familiarity feels warmly reassuring. ★★★

NIALL DOHERTY

Listen To: *Seven O'Clock* | *Take The Long Way* | *River Cross*



Gigaton is not without surprises, but Pearl Jam learned to play to their own strengths long ago.

Pearl Jam (Eddie Vedder, centre): a band “totally comfortable in their own skin.”



NAP EYES SNAPSHOT OF A BEGINNER

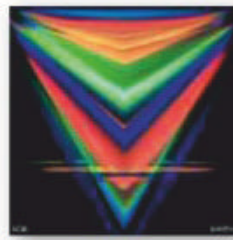
JAGJAGUWAR, OUT NOW

Poetic, off-kilter indie rock from Canadian four-piece.

Just as Franz Ferdinand have claimed not to be named after the slain Austrian archduke, so Mark Zuckerberg, the standout track on the fourth LP by Nova Scotia's Nap Eyes, appears not to be about the titan of tech. Instead, it's more a meditation on modern life, set to the sort of melodic but off-kilter indie at which Pavement once excelled. Nothing else matches that song's immediacy, though there are plenty of other tracks here that meander charmingly, frontman Nigel Chapman's poetic lyrics evoking the Silver Jews' streams of consciousness en route. At times they meander a little too much, as on the ponderous Fool Thinking Ways, but this is far from the work of beginners. ★★ ★

PHIL MONGREDIEN

Listen To: Mark Zuckerberg | Primordial Soup | Real Thoughts



EOB EARTH

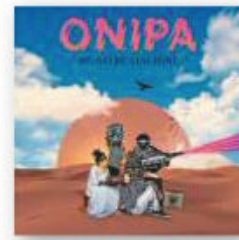
POLYDOR, OUT 17 APRIL

Radiohead guitarist steps into the limelight.

Three decades-plus as Radiohead's guitarist have served as a fine apprenticeship for Ed O'Brien's solo debut. These are, as you might expect, sophisticated, intricate songs that nod to the complexity of his band work, but remain distinct. Inspired by O'Brien's time living in Brazil, and particularly what he has referred to as the “musical eureka” moment of attending Carnival, what's striking is the record's diversity. The percussive strands that launch Olympik gather into something euphoric, like a whole neighbourhood of house parties, windows wide on a hot night; fleeting closer Cloak Of The Night is a finger-picked folk lilt with Laura Marling on guest vocals; Shangri-La, a twitching, bleeping, intoxicating adventure. Well worth the wait. ★★ ★ ★

LAURA BARTON

Listen To: Shangri-La | Olympik



ONIPA WE NO BE MACHINE

STRUT, OUT NOW

Futurist Afro-disco duo get on the good foot.

As leader of London jazz-hip-hop-Afrobeat collective Nubiyan Twist, Tom Excell is no stranger to the pull of propulsive, cross-pollinated grooves. So it goes for this team-up with Ghanaian singer K.O.G on debut We No Be Machine, the pair cooking up a storm of different styles on a record which seeks to find human connection in a robo-centric world. Makoma, featuring an emotive vocal turn from Afro-popper Wiyaala, pulses with effervescent highlife; Smoke Screen taps the energy of Konono No.1's junkyard funk; South African rapper Spoek Mathambo and the UK's Syntax trade verses over Free Up's bubbling percussive rumble; Sohaa sounds like OutKast after being reupholstered by Flying Lotus. Onipa's buoyant, free-spirited approach is a winner. ★★ ★

SIMON McEWEN

Listen To: Fire | Nipa Bi | Free Up



THE ORB ABOLITION OF THE ROYAL FAMILIA

COOKING VINYL, OUT NOW

Dub-club veterans recharge and fight the power on album #17.

He may flick the Vs at the monarchy with the title of The Orb's 17th album, but Alex Paterson's enduring electronic gangshow shares certain traits with the House Of Windsor. Both long-standing institutions in an ever-shifting world, they've stuck to what they do best, survived via infusions of new blood, and worn some striking headgear. Co-produced by new partner Michael Rendall, and with help from Roger Eno, Steve Hillage and Youth, Abolition... shows there's still vigour in The Orb's ambient house vision. Luxuriant disco, Vangelis-like synthscapes and even a cosmic tribute to Stephen Hawking complement the familiar dub moves. Paterson will get an OBE for services to dance music at this rate. ★★ ★ ★

IAN HARRISON

Listen To: Shape Shifters (In Two Parts) (Coffee & Ghost Train Mix)



PURITY RING WOMB

4AD, OUT NOW

Canadian pop experimentalists settle into a groove.

Emerging around the same time as Grimes, Purity Ring's Megan James and Corin Roddick shared their fellow countrywoman's penchant for deconstructing pop. But after 2015's Another Eternity album was followed by collaborations with the likes of Katy Perry, it felt like their early experiments were now becoming pop's base coat. On their third LP, they seem less preoccupied with reinventing the wheel, instead carving out ethereal electro-pop such as I Like The Devil one minute, and chipping away at vast walls of sound the next, as on Rubyinsides. Locked inside Womb is an excellent EP, but stretched out to 10 tracks it can feel predictable, a claim you'd have been hard-pressed to make about them a decade ago. ★★ ★

MICHAEL CRAGG

Listen To: Rubyinsides | I Like The Devil



RUSTIN MAN CLOCKDUST

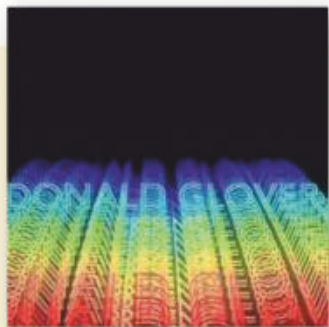
DOMINO, OUT NOW

Ex-Talk Talk bassist returns with gorgeous autumnal melancholia.

Talk Talk's landmark final albums made a virtue of quietness, silence even – and it was into silence that their various members retreated following their split in 1991. Clockdust comes from the same sessions as predecessor Drift Code, Paul Webb's first new music in 17 years, released shortly prior to the passing of former bandmate Mark Hollis. As on Drift Code, Webb paints in muted colours, here evoking the jazz-folk of John Martyn and, in his plaintive vocals, the English melancholy of Shirley Collins and Robert Wyatt. The songwriting is more direct too, questions of mortality and nature are faced head on, and curiously the record ends on its noisiest, most sonically chaotic moment. Silence, no more. ★★ ★ ★

FERGAL KINNEY

Listen To: Carousel Days | Man With A Remedy



CHILDISH GAMBINO

3.15.20

RCA, OUT NOW

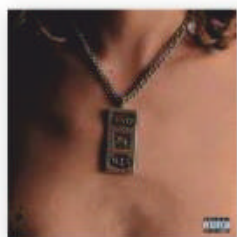
Actor/rapper returns with more first-rate rhymes.

This Is America, Donald Glover's unflinching and stupendously successful 2018 satire of US race-relations juxtaposed uplifting soul with icy trap and lyrics about police brutality, transforming him from kooky creative to zeitgeisty soothsayer in the process. On his first album since, Glover shelves stark societal commentary, but continues to offset sweetness with sour notes. On Time feel-good funk soundtracks a desperate quest for cosmic meaning, 35.31 discusses drug dealing over novelty country while smooth summer jam 42.26 bristles with dread. By warping his voice and glitching his grooves, Glover manages to impart ominous ambiguity, but it's his sharp, searching lyrics – 12.38's pastiche of hip-hop decadence; 39.28's beautiful evocation of grief – that elevates 3.15.20 to giddy heights. ★★★★★

RACHEL AROESTI

Listen To: Time | 39.28 | 53.49

Childish Gambino:
“OK, Spidermen,
I’m now going to
show you how to
flip an egg.”



SORRY

925

DOMINO, OUT NOW

Where killer tunes meet unnerving ennui.

There's something unsettling lurking around every corner of London duo Sorry's debut. A queasy sense of dread that warps songs detailing casual sex, listlessness, drugs and of a world rapidly crumbling around you. Asha Lorenz's disinterested vocals deliver melody lines worthy of mid-'90s Blur but they're constantly kept on edge by the discordant lurch of the music. Even 925's sweetest moment, the lovestruck Ode To Boy, is quickly bent out of shape by a creepy choir and background noise. Sorry rose to prominence in the same scene that birthed scuzzy rock'n'rollers Shame and Goat Girl, but the sonic scope here is far wider, incorporating both industrial and squawking jazz into something that chimes perfectly with uncertain times. ★★★★★

CHRIS CATCHPOLE

Listen To: Starstruck | Ode To Boy



TAMIKREST TAMOTAÏT

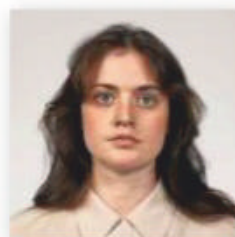
GLITTERBEAT, OUT NOW

Saharan desert blues from world psychedelic fusion pioneers.

Owing to the decade-long conflict that has engulfed their native northern Mali, Tuareg five-piece Tamikrest have pioneered a kind of psychedelic fusion across five albums while being exiled in France. Their music conjures the Sahara via a hypnotic desert blues that's informed by both Malian folk music and their love of Western bands such as Pink Floyd and Can. As such, they can be both rhythmically inventive and straightforwardly thrilling, as on the storming Amidinin Tad Adouniya. The high point here, though, is Timtarin, a stirring duet with Moroccan actress Hindi Zahra, while the group continue to innovate by incorporating traditional Japanese scales into the gorgeous, finger-picked guitar on Tabsit. ★★★★★

FERGAL KINNEY

Listen To: Tabsit | Amzagh | Anha Anchal Wad Namda | Timtarin



TOPS

I FEEL ALIVE

MUSIQUE TOPS, OUT NOW

Fourth album from Montreal's knowing soft-rockers.

There's such a sweetness to Jane Penny's voice that you could be forgiven for thinking the songs she makes with her band TOPS are just empty calories. Admittedly, eight years after their lovely debut Tender Opposites, their aesthetic – cold-pressed Fleetwood Mac, a degraded tape of Chris Rea's Fool If You Think It's Over, woozy 10th-generation-copy synths – feels so far behind the curve that it's just rolling gently backwards on roller-skates at this point. Yet Direct Sunlight's fluting pop or the title track's lost college-rock jangle is more than enough to draw you into TOPS' little world: more edge, it seems, would only burst their bubble. ★★★★★

VICTORIA SEGAL

Listen To: Direct Sunlight | Ballads & Sad Movies | OK Fine Whatever



YVES TUMOR

HEAVEN TO A
TORTURED MIND

WARP, OUT NOW

Master shapeshifter does saucy glam-pop and Prince-like funk.

By shunning interviews and presenting himself as a myriad of startling characters, you might expect Turin-based/Tennessee-born Yves Tumor's music to be every bit as mysterious as the artist himself. Yet his sound is relatively straight-up. On the slinky Kerosene! and more industrial Dream Palette, for example, Tumor comes across like an even more priapic Prince. Elsewhere, he's as in thrall to 1980s R&B as he is the jazzier side of Bowie and OutKast's pop balladry – and when he croons “tell me I'm your lover” on the languid Super Stars, it's hard to turn down. Things get even more sultry on Strawberry Privilege and murky instrumental Asteroid Blues. Sleazy listening at its best. ★★★★★

LEONIE COOPER

Listen To: Kerosene! | Super Stars



SPORTS TEAM

DEEP DOWN HAPPY

ISLAND, OUT NOW

Indie-rock, just like 2005 used to make.

The upturn in fortunes of The Kooks, The Wombats and other bands you'd find on *Skins: The Soundtrack* is proof that the music of the mid-'00s is undergoing a revival. London-based Sports Team are the fresh case. They have a singer in Alex Rice who specialises

in the eat-the-microphone delivery favoured by frontmen of the era and the music pinballs between ramshackle indie-rock (that sounds a bit like The Cribs) and ramshackle post-punk grooves (that sounds a bit like The Rakes). The indelible choruses, most expertly dispatched on *Camel Crew* and *The Races*, are all their own, and while the sound they make is unmistakably then, their tales of life in your 20s in modern Britain are unmistakably now. So then, now, does it matter? Sports Team don't sound like the sort to get bogged down by the small print. ★★★

NIALL DOHERTY

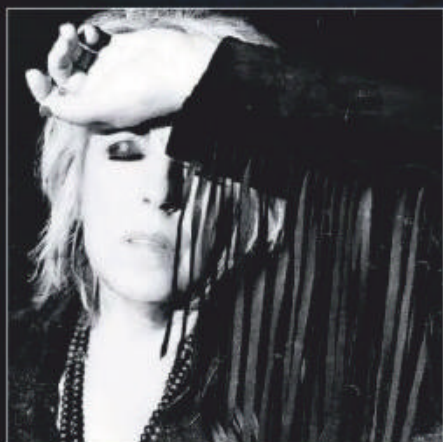
Listen To: *Camel Crew* | *The Races*



Squad goals: Sports Team, pros at the "expertly dispatched, indelible chorus."

← DRESSING ROOMS

Raw power:
Lucinda Williams
“grows into the
depths of her
voice with every
album.”



LUCINDA WILLIAMS

GOOD SOULS BETTER ANGELS

HIGHWAY 20/THIRTY TIGERS, OUT 24 APRIL

**Queen of Americana turns her
attention to politics.**

Lucinda Williams is an artist who seems to grow into the depths of her voice with every album. Good Souls

Better Angels is her 15th studio release, and one that steps away from the intimate narratives that have defined much of her career, to stride out in a more political direction. It suits her. Opening with the snarling blues of You Can't Rule Me is the equivalent of walking into the saloon and announcing there's a new sheriff in town. The slow, tarry unfurling

of Bad News Blues tells of the relentless bombardment of misery, while Wakin' Up explores domestic abuse with a gathering fury. It's the voice that carries it all: rawer and more rousing by the minute. ★★★★★

LAURA BARTON

**Listen To: You Can't Rule Me |
Bad News Blues | Wakin' Up**

THE WEEKND AFTER HOURS

ISLAND, OUT NOW

Canadian miserabilist thaws out his sound.

In pop's recent pivot towards melancholy, the influence of Abel Tesfaye cannot be overstated. His directional and mildly disconcerting debut mixtape of 2011 fused gothic new wave, moody R&B and lyricism that revolved almost entirely around numbed debauchery – a recipe that later yielded mega-hits such as Starboy and Can't Feel My Face. On his fourth album as The Weeknd, that carefully honed aesthetic remains intact: spidery tendrils of sex-and-drugs-related dread curl around dramatic synth-pop and twinkling R&B. Yet there's also a batch of tracks (Blinding Lights and In Your Eyes among them) that draw from bombastic, slightly tacky '80s pop – a warm, funny and wholly welcome diversion from the stylish but sterile bleakness that remains Tesfaye's calling card. ★★★★★

RACHEL AROESTI

Listen To: Hardest To Love | Blinding Lights | Save Your Tears



The Weeknd: "sex-and-drugs-related dread" still a speciality.

MUST BUYS

The essential albums of the last few months

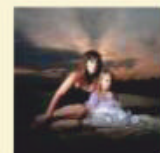


Tame Impala
The Slow Rush

FICTION

Few artists embody the

musical cross-pollination of recent years like Kevin Parker – and his fourth LP is one that thrillingly plunders from a cornucopia of sounds and styles from across electronic and dance music's past and present. Tame Impala might be operating in a field of one, but even then, Parker is still streaks ahead.



U.S. Girls
Heavy Light

4AD

Toronto-based Meg Remy has

always clouded her pop surfaces with unease and political protest, but here she moves closer to home, picking at family ties, at self-determination, at the immune response to a sick world. This is a record that looks backwards in the hope of finding new answers, new outcomes, without melting in the dark.

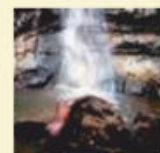


Waxahatchee
Saint Cloud

MERGE

Katie Crutchfield is moving

towards self-acceptance and stability on her fifth album, a set of gorgeous indie and expansive Americana that nods to the feel-good cadences of '70s soft rock. Crutchfield has always worn her heart on her sleeve, but this LP feels less like a confessional and more a vessel for warmth, serenity and worldly wisdom.



Moses Sumney
Grae

JAGJAGUWAR

There's a sense throughout this

first part of a proposed double LP that Moses Sumney is an artist expanding his reach in all directions. Somehow, he's able to fuse art and soul into a radically inclusive soundworld that draws influences and styles into a polyamorous, non-binary embrace. It's a thrilling testament to a spirit set free.



M. WARD MIGRATION STORIES

ANTI-, OUT NOW

Portland indie-folker dazzles again on 10th solo album.

As the title suggests, M Ward's latest LP is inspired by human restlessness, both literal and metaphorical. It's a concept that exists more in its author's head than the listener's, and if a common narrative spills from these songs it's one of finding kindness and trust in a fractured world. Ward has an uncanny ability to sound profound and frivolous all at once, achieved here by marrying bouncing pop melodies to cosmic dreams on Migration Of Souls, drenching cowboy standard The Santa Fe Trail in swathes of reverb, or mixing jazzy guitar solos with a horse-hoof beat on Coyote Mary's Traveling Show. A thought-provoking songwriter and under-valued guitarist, Ward continues to set a standard few other artists can match. ★★★★★

ANDY FYFE

Listen To: Migration Of Souls | Coyote Mary's Traveling Show



YAEJI WHAT WE DREW

GODMODE, OUT NOW

Korean-American artist stages a quiet revolution.

Drink I'm Sippin On, Kathy Yaeji Lee's 2017 breakthrough single, was a slinky, hypnotic swirl of trap and expansive electronica, delivered partly in English, partly in Korean. With her first full-length release, Lee continues to hone her subtly weird take on hip-hop, drawing from dream-pop, house and tingly ASMR. Opener My Imagination mixes together spectral synth washes, chipmunk rapping and groggy beats; the title track gilds a skeleton of tinny snares with barely-there brass and translucent vocals; and In Place sports a bassy rumble you can feel rather than actually hear. Simultaneously disorientating and seductive, Lee's gossamer-light handling of latter-day rap tropes gives the genre a gentle push forward. ★★★★★

RACHEL AROESTI

Listen To: My Imagination | In The Mirror | These Days



YIN YIN THE RABBIT THAT HUNTS TIGERS

BONGO JOE, OUT 24 APRIL

Pan-global grooves from Maastricht-based psychedelicists.

Much like their Texan spirit animals Khruangbin, Maastricht-based Yin Yin fashion South-East Asian music into a potent strain of groove-driven psych rock. While they lean heavily on the region's traditional instrumentation, debut album The Rabbit That Hunts Tigers throws its net far and wide, pulling in Krautrock, desert-parched African blues, fuzz-heavy '60s psychedelia, snippets from kung-fu movies and, on self-explanatorily titled closer Dis Kô Dis Kô, the pulsating, robotic throb of Giorgio Moroder. Vocal-free throughout, it's a relentlessly enjoyable trip and one that picks up the common funk thread from an entire history of music. ★★★★★

CHRIS CATCHPOLE

Listen To: One Inch Punch | Alpaca | Dis Kô Dis Kô



Highlights from Q partners
Absolute Radio this month include The Beatles' *Let It Be* and a listen back to the greatest hits from the '80s and '90s.



...Be here now: The Beatles' last album is featured on Absolute.

ALBUM OF THE WEEK: THE BEATLES' LET IT BE

Absolute Radio, 7 April, 9pm
 On the 10th April, 1970, the Daily Mirror ran the front page headline: "Paul Quits The Beatles". Their final studio album, *Let It Be*, was released a month later, 50 years ago, after the group's break-up, on 8 May. In the Album Of The Week slot, Danielle Perry looks back at the events leading up to the split of the band who changed everything, playing tracks from the record throughout the week.

FRANK SKINNER

Absolute Radio, 11 April, 8am
 Comedy legend Frank Skinner is joined by co-hosts Emily Dean and Alun Cochrane every Saturday morning for a round-up of the week's gossip and the best real music. The show, which has been running since 2009, has won numerous awards and is commercial radio's most popular podcast.

THE INDIE DISCO

Absolute Radio, 11 April, 5pm
 If you misspent your youth dancing to baggy anthems and

Britpop bangers in dark rooms with sticky floors, The Indie Disco is the show for you. Andy Bush hosts, with a two-hour playlist that dips into punk, new wave, alternative '80s, synths, goths and the biggest indie anthems of the last 20 years.

FORGOTTEN '80s

Absolute 80s, 12 April, 9pm
Absolute 80s' Sunday night show has been running since 2013 and has developed a cult following with its deep and eclectic mix of singles you rarely hear on the radio. Host Matthew Rudd is the

kind of guy you'd want on your quiz team: he owns all the '80s' Now That's What I Call Music! albums on cassette – "acquired when they were first released," says Matthew – and has access to every Top 40 hit from the decade in his vast archive.

FORGOTTEN '90s

Absolute Radio 90s, 19 April, 9pm
 Chris Martin delves deep into the decade that brought us the likes of Incognito, Inspiral Carpets, Mansun and Mazzy Star, for an hour of lesser-heard gems from the 1990s.

This month SNMC host **Danielle Perry** suggests how creativity will help fight the virus crisis...



“I’m sat here writing this amid the virus crisis, where we’ve already seen an unprecedented shake-up of the music industry. Tours, festivals and releases have been cancelled or postponed. It’s such a heartbreaking time for the majority of artists

and crew who suddenly find their summers cancelled. Fortunately, we know this is a creative industry and we always bounce back from difficult times in imaginative ways. This makes me excited to see how it will adapt and grow, especially in the areas of live streaming

gigs, online blogs, instrument lessons and even pop-star cooking videos. One idea I’ve seen online is the suggestion that some of the streaming services could perhaps temporarily drop their fees during a lockdown. This would give an opportunity to those

who’ve yet to invest in the streaming concept to sign up and do some exploring. Also, we have a world-class industry, but it’s really important we continue to support new artists because they are our future.”
 ■ *The Sunday Night Music Club* starts at 8pm.

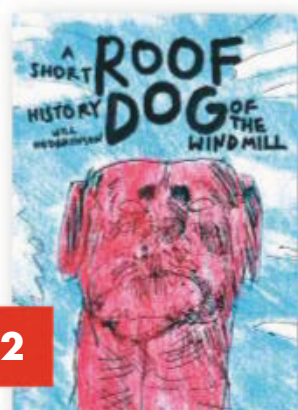
These Sex Pistols photos catch one last blaze of furious, snaggle-toothed glory.

1

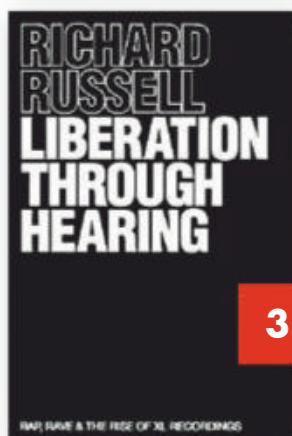


BOOKS

Victoria Segal picks the best music books of the month



2



3




4

On Christmas Day 1977, photographer Kevin Cummins pushed back his chair at the end of Christmas dinner and announced he was off to Huddersfield to see the Sex Pistols. “My parents were apoplectic with rage,” he writes in the introduction to **1 Sex Pistols: The End Is Near 25.12.77** (ACC ART BOOKS, ★★★★★), “my father didn’t speak to me for at least three weeks afterwards.” The reward, though, was these fabulous pictures of the embattled band’s last UK show – Johnny Rotten a lit firework, Sid Vicious in full sneer, everyone so young. Three weeks later, it was over, the band imploding in America: these photographs catch one last blaze of furious, snaggle-toothed glory.

Sticky traces of punk spirit streak **2 Roof Dog: A Short History Of The Windmill** by Will Hodgkinson (ROUGH TRADE, ★★★★★). The flat-roofed Brixton pub has been a harbourage for Fat White Family, Goat Girl and Black Midi and with Roof Dog – named after Ben the Rottweiler, who once urinated on some

“moody French goths” taking themselves too seriously – Hodgkinson testifies to the power of those grubby spaces that, inexplicably, charge up with magic, become portals to an alternate life. Scene set.

Less disreputable, but equally committed to its cause, is **3 Liberation Through Hearing** (WHITE RABBIT, ★★★★★), the steady, Zelig-like memoir of XL label head and producer Richard Russell and a non-stop trip through 30 years of music, from The Prodigy and Bobby Womack, Adele to Dizzee Rascal. “To back Adele to the fullest was the easiest thing in the world. Just as it was to back Liam Howlett,” Russell writes. “I knew that we were all in the right place.”

Also at the centre of his universe is Big Narstie, whose no-nonsense **4 How To Be Narstie** (EBURY, ★★★★★) draws on his experience as online advice-dispenser Uncle Pain to create a rough-and-tumble manual for living. School, fame, fatherhood, the importance of the NHS after you’ve been “fucked up by a crackhead” – he did it his way, and now you can, too. 

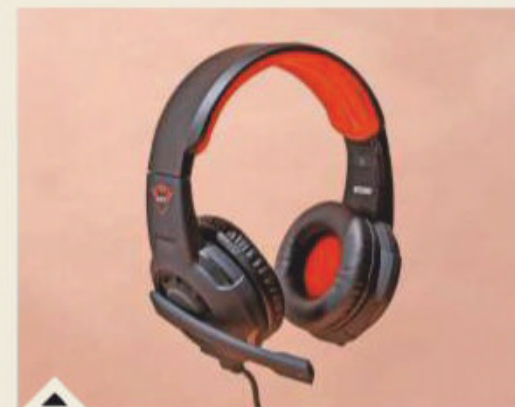
GADGETS

Niall Doherty's gizmos round-up.



GRADO GW100 £169

This pair of wireless headphones are perfect for home use, handy in these home-bound times. They were tested in the kitchen, the living room, the bedroom, the hallway, and they sounded great everywhere. The only drawback is that the sound bleeds out ever so slightly, meaning you can be tracked easily by the kids. So they were tested in a locked bathroom, too. Still sounded good. ★★★★★



TRUST GXT 310 £16.99

You know what they say: “Those who can, teach, and those who can work from home, game.” This headset will give you a solid sound while your new mate Lucas, a 12-year-old who lives in Kettering, talks you through the absolute beating he’s serving up for you on Fifa. They are comfortable so you can take repeated whippings without getting achey ears. ★★★



MASTER & DYNAMIC MW07 PLUS £279

Master & Dynamic might sound like a time-travel cop buddy show that lasted for two series on Channel 5 in the late-'90s, but they are actually a high-quality audio company. These are a great pair of in-ear headphones with an impressive 40-hour battery life, meaning you can go and hide in the loft with your favourite albums for a day and a half. We all need a breather. ★★★★★

QMail

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Letter Of The Month

R.I.P Lord Sabre

It seems that everyone has their own tale about meeting Mr Weatherall. I spent a couple of evenings in his company. Both in the DJ booth in the New Ardri in Hulme, Manchester, at the infamous Herbal Tea Party nights. We bonded briefly due to a mutual appreciation of sheepskin car coats, obscure rockabilly records and Lee Perry's production on The Clash's Complete Control. Despite the weed,

I remember it clearly because I thought it was strange he chatted with me rather than all the other pie-eyed techno freaks! As others have said, he appeared to be a genuinely unassuming man who was in it for the art and the culture, not the money or the fame. He certainly wasn't paid well for these gigs, one of which included a live Sabres Of Paradise set, with a proper band! *TJW, Manchester*



Andrew Weatherall: "in it for the art and the culture."



It Was All A Blur

Dear Q, They say that love is blind, which might explain why you didn't consult the history books from the time when you declared last month that Blur's Tender [*Q's Greatest Love Songs Of The Last 60 Years list*] was "not considered a career best upon release" and was only

Q COMPETITION

Win! A KitSound BoomBar 50 Bluetooth Speaker.



Q has teamed up with the good people at KitSound to offer TWO readers the chance to win a KitSound BoomBar 50 Bluetooth Speaker, worth £49.99. The BoomBar 50 offers a great range of features, including no-limit listening with its 22-hour play time, and IP67 waterproof protection for when listening to music in the garden or by pool.

Not only does the BoomBar boast a stylish, metallic design that fits anywhere in the home, but it also has superb surround sound (due to two passive radiators for an extra bass boost) which easily connects via Bluetooth to another BoomBar so you can enjoy double the audio with stereo pairing for a truly immersive experience.

For more information, visit www.kitsound.co.uk

This month's teaser:
What is the name of the street photographed on the cover of Oasis's (What's The Story) Morning Glory? album?

Send your answer (one per person), including your address, to captioncomp@Qthemusic.com or on a postcard to the above address. Competition closes: **24 April 2020.**

Q408 Winners:

Congratulations to Steve Hutton, Dundee, and Jayne Theaker, Sheffield, who each win a pair of KitSound Immerse 75-Noise-Cancelling Wireless Headphones.

Ts&Cs: To win, email your answer to: captioncomp@Qthemusic.com or post to the usual Q address before 24/4/20. Two winners will be chosen by the panel. The winners will be notified, by email, 7-10 days after the closing date and must respond to Q within 14 days or another winner may be chosen. Q will not respond to questions about its chosen winners but will provide winners' names and the home towns, provided a request is made to the usual Q address and accompanied with a SAE. One entry per person and you must be over 18 and live in the UK. Prize is non-negotiable with no cash alternative. Personal data will be collected by Q and passed to prize provider to process entries. See <http://www.bauerdatapromise.co.uk> for more details. Ts&Cs apply, see www.bauerlegal.co.uk/competition-terms.html. Any queries, email: QMail@Qthemusic.com

later redeemed at the band's 2009 reunion shows. That comment got me rummaging through my back issues of Q where I found Tom Doyle's review of 13 from 1999, and he appears to contradict your analysis. In fact, it seems he had a lot of love for the Number 2 hit single: "Calling card single Tender has already burned itself into the national consciousness, all Appalachian guitar and Give Peace A Chance shuffle." That sounds like a potential "career best" to me. Anyway, keep up the good work, Q. Still love ya!

Arthur Hobbs, Croydon

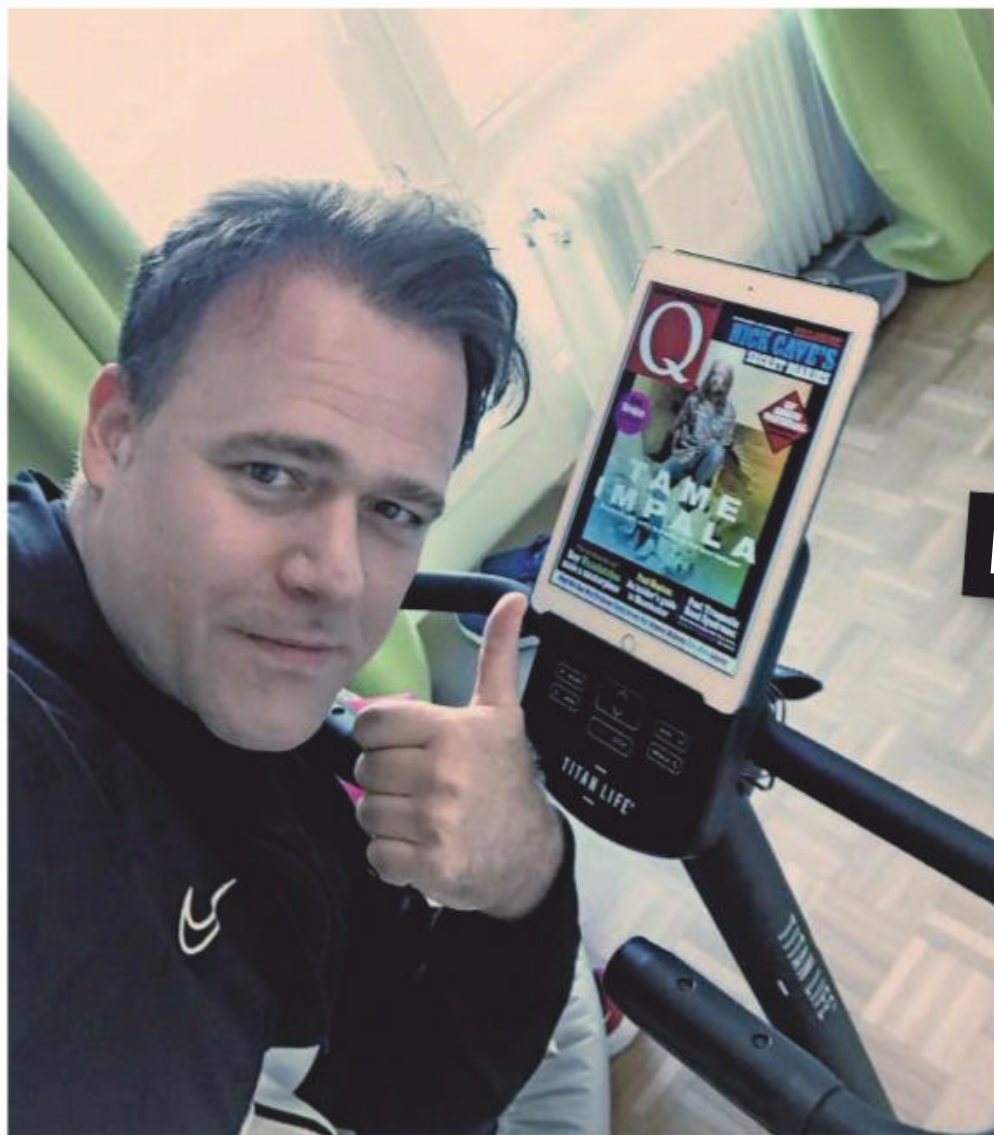
Where Have All The Rock Bands Gone?

Dear Q, I was really interested in your writer Dorian Lynskey's comments in the last issue [Q410 Cover Feature] where he pointing out in the Tame Impala feature that The 1975 and Kevin Parker's band are the only new "rock bands" to become international festival headliners during the 2010s. It got me wondering what that says about "rock" music in the 2020s and beyond? Are traditional "bands" still going to be sustainable, what with the financial burden, carbon footprint, etc? It might be easy for the likes of Coldplay and Radiohead to be environmentally responsible, but it's a different story for struggling up-and-coming bands. Maybe you should do a feature on this subject in the next issue?

Jen Williams, Sterling

Johnny's John

So Razorlight's Johnny Borrell [Q410, Post Traumatic Band Syndrome] reckons that, "Everything I learned, I learned downstairs in the Dublin Castle" in Camden. Now, as far as I'm aware, and I've been frequenting said establishment since the late-'70s (when Madness established their live reputation



The World of Q

IN SPLENDID ISOLATION

Send your photographs of you and Q in lockdown to Qmail@qthemusic.com with a word or two about where you are and what you're doing.

◀ Here's Gabor Posta in Vienna, Austria, enjoying the latest digital issue of Q at home.



Johnny Borrell: a Camden man.

there), the only thing you'll find downstairs at the Dublin Castle are the toilets and a dilapidated dancefloor. Now, I'm not saying Mr Borrell *didn't* learn everything he knows in the DC's khazi, but I'm just wondering exactly what he might've learnt down there? If you're reading this, Johnny, I'd love to know!

Pete Snell, via Q Mail

Join The Club

Dear Q, It would be wonderful if you could "toss a coin to your Witcher" and spare a little space in your magazine for The Slow Readers Club, the best new band I've heard for years. As they're from Manchester and have an electro vibe to them, they're often compared to fellow Mancunians Joy Division, but I get more of a Depeche Mode, circa the Violator album, influence from them, with their shows full of Personal Jesus-style

mass singalong moments. I never imagined travelling so far for gigs but I've flown out from Seattle twice in the last two years just to see The Slow Readers Club, and I have to say it was well worth it! Their fourth album, Joy Of The Return, has just been released and will hopefully bring even more diehard fans into the Readers family. Cheers!

Isaac Peterson, Seattle

Lockdown Music

Dear Q, Thank you so much for your recent Tame Impala issue – it has been a godsend during lockdown here in South London. Brilliant features on Kevin Parker's band, Paul Heaton, Waxahatchee and Stephen Malkmus really lifted the spirits and helped me take my mind off what's going on in the outside world. It also inspired me to seek out the brilliant music by the sadly departed Andrew Weatherall and download U.S. Girls' ace new album, Heavy Light. Keep 'em coming, Q.

Thomas Fraser, Brixton

Q410 Spine Message

"Lichtenstein" was German zoologist Hinrich Lichtenstein, who first identified the impala – an antelope found in Eastern and Southern Africa. Which ties in rather nicely with this month's cover stars, Tame Impala. Can I please get a ticket for their upcoming London show (if it's still on) if I'm correct?

PJ Meadows, via Q Mail

Correct, PJ, but no spare tickets this time unfortunately.

“Life’s about getting drunk with your grandparents...”

Princess Nokia

The rapper on the joys of spending time with family, hearty breakfasts and how Game Of Thrones should’ve ended.



When did someone last call you Destiny?

Today, when my dad called

me. He called me Destiny Nicole, which is my childhood name. He’s always called me that, or sometimes just D.

What was the last video game you played?

Mario Kart. Actually, that’s a lie. The last video game I played was Galaga. It’s an arcade game from the ’70s which I bought recently. It’s like Space Invaders, kind of. I’m pretty good at it.

As someone who wrote a song about Game Of Thrones (2014’s Dragons), did you enjoy the last ever episode?

Absolutely not! I felt that Cersei Lannister should’ve died [*posh English accent*] a bloody gruesome, treacherous, long death! But I did love that the Stark family eventually restored peace and order.

When did you last spend too much money on something?

The last time I went to a Pow Wow [*an event celebrating Native American culture*] I spent over \$3000 in less than one hour and my card got flagged! It was a benefit supporting indigenous, local businesses, so I was spending a lot of money quickly at different places so my card got picked up. I was just trying to put money back into the community!

What was the last meal you cooked for someone else?

I recently cooked a big breakfast for a group of friends. I did spinach pate, eggs and salami,



Princess Nokia: would rather draw than go to the IMAX.

tofu, cheese, avocado... and then some fruit. Did it go down well? Everyone had a good time.

When was the last time someone was rude to you?

Probably this week. I’m sure I had a fan tell me on social media that I sucked and they hated my music. I always ignore them.

When did you last walk out of a movie?

When I went to see Mad Max: Fury Road at the IMAX. It was all just too much for my eyes to cope with so I left the cinema.

When did you last get nervous about something?

When I released my two albums, Everything Is Beautiful and Everything Sucks, at the same time. That gave me butterflies in my stomach just thinking about that this morning. It’s kind of a big thing to do something like that.

What was the last thing that happened to you which made you think “everything is beautiful” in life?

When I took my grandmother to a salsa concert at Radio City Music Hall in New York. Just seeing her look so excited and happy made me think, “This is it! Everything is beautiful! This is what my life’s about.” I recently also spent time with my grandfather and we got drunk and got talking about life and those were like the two best days of my life ever. I thought, “This is what life’s about: getting drunk with my grandparents!”

What was the last thing that happened to you which made you think “everything sucks” in life?

Seeing a lot of brothers from the hip-hop community die. That sucks. No parent should have to

bury a child. And no child should be denied life. The passing of beautiful people sucks.

When was the last time Nokia approached you for a link-up?

They’ve never talked to me! But I’d love to do a collaboration with them. I’ll talk to my manager about that. Maybe if they read this it might happen!

When did you last laugh so much that it hurt?

A few days ago with my best friend. We were laughing about some bad fashion faux-pas.

When did you last break the law?

I hopped a train a few weeks ago. Who has time to walk three blocks to get to the exit to pay for your ticket? It’s ridiculous!

What’s the last thing you’d do before the end of the world?

I’d call my family, then I’d get fucking high!

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